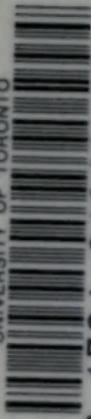


JOHN BURNS

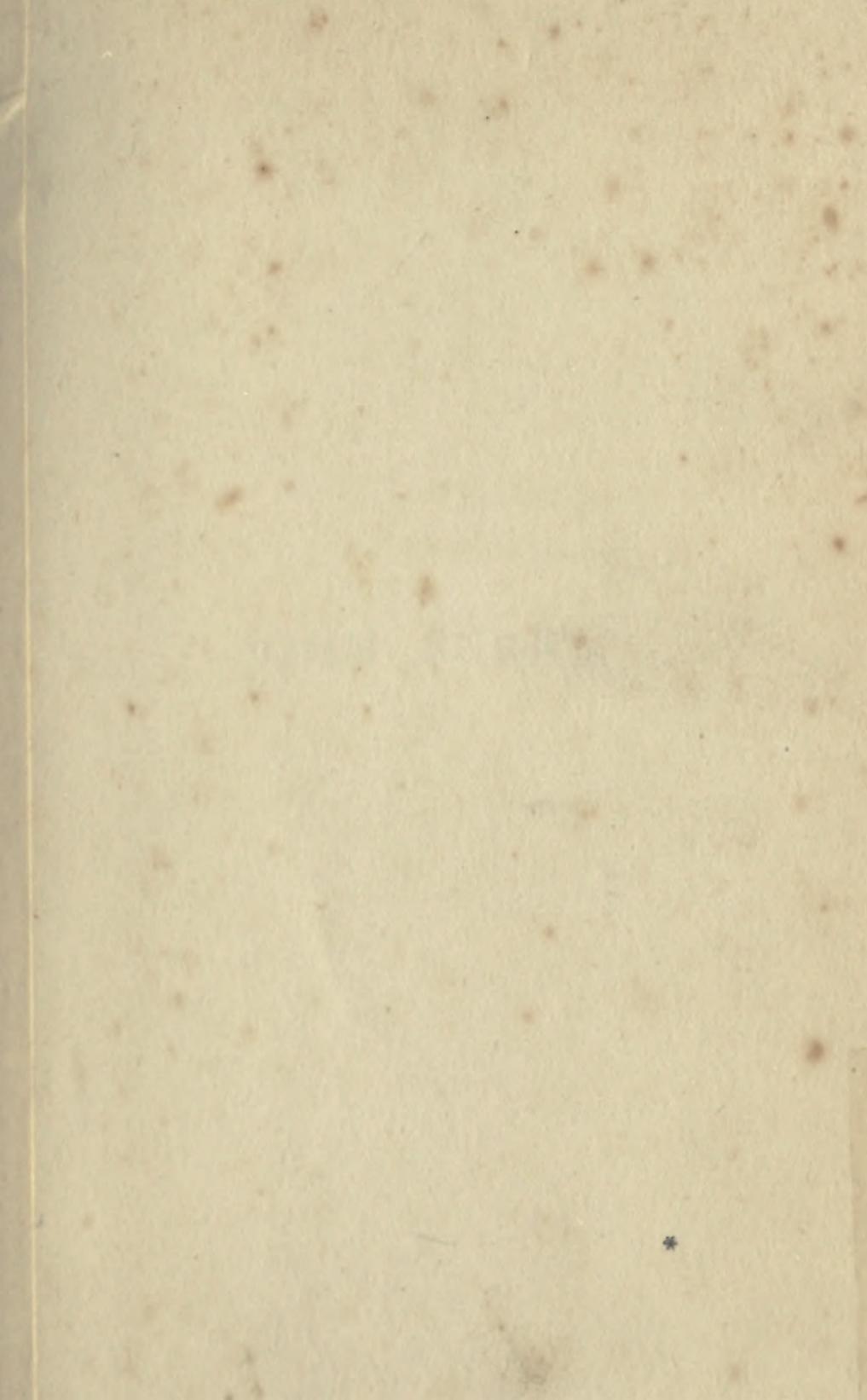
THE RISE AND PROGRESS
OF A RIGHT HONOURABLE

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



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JOHN BURNS

PRESS OPINIONS

Daily News, London, says :—

“A book which is likely to create a good deal of comment by its outspoken criticism. . . . Mr. Burgess, in graphic language, traces the rise of the Labour Party, and the efforts of its leaders. He tells many good stories.”

(*Column and a half notice.*)

The Evening News, London, says :—

“It is the most unorthodox biography of modern times.”

(*Column notice.*)

Weekly Despatch, London, says :—

“A remarkable book.”

(*Three-quarter column notice.*)

Forward, Glasgow, says :—

“The material of it is carefully gathered and cunningly worked. It is a grim and ghastly warning of what ultimately befalls one who betrays a trust and sells his comrades. . . . A history of the early Socialist movement and the birth pangs of the Labour Party.”

(*Column notice.*)

Justice, London, says :—

“This book is most interesting from the striking coincidence it unintentionally shows between those events of the past and what is taking place now. We can see history repeating itself.”

(*Column and a half notice.*)



JOSEPH BURGESS

JOHN BURNS:

THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF A RIGHT HONOURABLE

BY

JOSEPH BURGESS

Proprietor, *The Operative*, 1884-85; Editor, *The Workman's Times*, 1890-94

Author of "The I. L. P.: Its Origin and Early History"

"Reminiscences of a Socialist Agitator," &c. &c.

FOURTH EDITION

GLASGOW

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To

WILLIAM MARTIN HADDOW

GLASGOW SCHOOL BOARD

“THE CHILDREN’S FRIEND”

AND

MY LEAL COMRADE



H. M. HYNDMAN

FOREWORD

My old friend Joseph Burgess has asked me to write a few words by way of introduction to his survey of John Burns's career. I gladly do this; for although Burgess and myself have not always been agreed as to what should be done to advance our movement, and quite possibly we may regard the present situation from different points of view, there is certainly no man who has served the cause more honestly or has done more unseen and unremunerative work for the Independent Labour Party, and the Labour Party which has grown out of it, than Burgess himself. In fact many of those who now take credit to themselves for having organised and led those combinations really owe their positions to Joseph Burgess and Robert Blatchford.

I am bound to say, however, that I should not myself have considered it worth the while of Burgess to publish a detailed account of the discreditable doings of the President of the Local Government Board. The record of a turncoat from his class, who has done all he can in office to thwart any improvement being made in the condition of those whose cause he formerly pretended to champion, is not very pleasant to read. It only shows what we long ago knew, that in all class

struggles treachery to the workers pays the traitor well.

I am not, of course, in any way responsible for Burgess's accuracy in his statements of what took place. He throughout, in my opinion, greatly exaggerates the influence which Burns had in the Social Democratic Federation. We all regarded him as a valuable flag-waver and stump-orator, but in Council and in Committee he was absolutely useless, and I do not remember a single occasion during the years he was with us when John Burns made a suggestion of any importance. Moreover, he was under great obligations to those who educated him and wrote his speeches and articles for him. When he first came among us, early in 1884, Burns was as ignorant and as rough a specimen of the English working man as I have ever encountered. Some of us soon saw that he had qualities which would make him of great use to our movement, then, as always, in need of powerful speakers and active propagandists. It is all to Burns's credit that he took full advantage of the opportunities offered to him; but it is a little amusing to read the eulogy on Burns's speech at the Old Bailey, when as a matter of fact Champion and I wrote that speech for him.

His colossal conceit was always in evidence. I remember quite early in our acquaintance he sent me an article for *Justice* which was absolutely unreadable. I corrected its defects of grammar, divided the interminable sentences, and made it, I think, a pretty good article. The next time I met Burns he said, "if it had been anybody but you,

Hyndman, who had slaughtered my article in that way I would have broken his head!" Similarly, when Burns was quite unknown, standing with me on the platform at Nottingham, I allowed him to speak first, taking my chance of dealing with the audience after he had finished. I had not been speaking ten minutes when Burns, who sat behind me, tugged my coat and asked me to sit down. These things, of course, were very laughable at the time and are still more laughable now. I only cite them as evidences of the amazingly good opinion which Burns had of himself even in those early days.

I should be the last man, however, to deny that for four or five years Burns did very useful work for Socialism in this country. He was, I think, on the whole the best stump-orator I ever heard. Though not possessed of the argumentative power which gave Charles Bradlaugh his great influence over his audiences, Burns had a better voice, a more taking figure, and, to use Lord Beaconsfield's phrase, "no scruples whatsoever to restrain him." Gifted, therefore, with a jovial appearance and sublime self-confidence, he was of the greatest service at our unemployed meetings in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere; not even Tom Mann being quite his equal in this department, though much more valuable as an organiser and for all unseen work.

Burns's efforts during the Dock strike, which he had a large share in bringing about prematurely, were really extraordinary and quite equal to anything that was done by others who were less in the

FOREWORD

public eye. Though not long after this he drifted off into the Liberal camp and entered upon the series of arrangements with the Liberals which have placed him in the Cabinet, he nevertheless fought fine fights at Battersea, first for the County Council and then for his seat in Parliament. It is sad to think now of those enthusiastic working-class Socialists who, believing fully in Burns's honesty and ability, used to sit up night after night first to paste up his bills and then to watch out of bed till daylight in order to see that his then enemies and present friends did not tear them down. Many of these men have never recovered from the shock of his selling out.

When Burns had become a regular member of the Capitalist Liberal Party his doings lost all interest for me, except in so far as they tended to discourage the people who had believed in him and had worked for him. Strange to say, it was quite useless for us of the S.D.F. and of *Justice* to warn the workers against him at this time. Even men who ought to have known better were not ashamed to attribute our criticism and denunciation of Burns to jealousy. Even so lately as 1906, when he entered the Liberal Cabinet and became a servile courtier, there were still some who imagined that Burns was honest.

His career at the Local Government Board has now opened the eyes of the most credulous, and we can all see that from the very first—as he once hinted to Quelch—his sole object was to sit with a red box in front of him on the Treasury Bench. That he should have achieved this position by

turning round upon his principles and betraying all the men who had enabled him to make a successful trade of the education and reputation he had acquired at their expense might be forgiven, or at any rate forgotten. But that he should have used and should be using to-day his official position and influence as head of the Administration of the Poor Law in this country to injure the unemployed and harass the miserable in every way he possibly can, is conduct which is quite unpardonable and approaches in infamy the misdeeds of the miscreant Azeff himself.

H. M. HYNDMAN.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IT was no part of my original intention to write a preface to this book, but to let it, with only such introduction as would be furnished by Mr. Hyndman in his "Foreword," speak for itself. But, since reading Mr. Hyndman's introduction, it has suggested itself to me that it were wise to explain the motives which impelled me to write the book itself. It is not because of any pleasure in the job.

What Hyndman says about Burns's egotism I can corroborate. Hyndman refers to a coat-pulling incident of which he was the victim. I remember seeing, from my seat at the press table at the Cardiff Trades Congress, Burns pulling the coat-tails of an American fraternal delegate. This was the first time fraternal delegates from America had attended the British Trades Union Congress. They had travelled more than three thousand miles to deliver their message. But Burns could not abide to hear it out. The first delegate was not on his feet more than ten minutes before Burns tugged at him to sit down. I once discussed this habit of Burns with Will Crooks, when he told me he never by any chance sat next to Burns on a platform. "I always," Crooks said, "note where Burns is sitting, and then get as far away from him as

possible." This impatience and jealousy accounts for much in Burns's career.

Another pertinent sidelight on character is shown by Hyndman in the passage where he refers to Burns's sterility in Council. Indeed, I question whether in the whole of his voluminous utterances on Labour or Socialist problems a single original idea can be fathered on Burns. Nor is he tenacious in holding to ideas he adopts at second-hand. The first time this struck me was so far back as 1891, during a casual conversation in the Chancery Lane Democratic Club. Burns on that occasion offered some critical observations on the conduct of the Parisian police which I considered inconsistent. I told him so rather sharply. Soon afterwards, in the same conversation, he gave utterance to views diametrically opposed to those that had excited my dissent. The truth seems to be that Burns lacks initiative. First the Social Democrats, as described by Hyndman, used Burns as a sort of giant gramophone. When he became a member of the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, James Mawdsley notoriously employed him to shoot the bullets he had moulded in the form of new standing orders. True, that gave Burns an opportunity to score off Keir Hardie, and he did not mind committing hari-kari to do it. This defect explains Burns's patent subserviency to the bureaucrats at the L.G.B. The permanent officials with whom he now works soon discovered his weakness, and Burns is as pliable putty in their hands.

Knowing all this, and recognising as one is forced

to do that, in these days, a kind of legendary Burns is being built up by those who applaud his present policy, it occurred to me that if I could paint Burns as he really was in the successive stages of his evolution, and for the pigments I have relied solely on his own professions and protestations, using in every case either his own words as publicly recorded or as spoken to me personally, I would not only be laying bare the real motives that converted the Republican Man with the Red Flag of twenty-five years ago into the accomplished courtier of to-day and the one-time blatant propagandist of revolutionary Socialism into the reactionary bureaucrat who opposes every instalment of palliative collectivism—I felt, I say, that I would not only do this, and thus render a service to historical accuracy, but might be able, incidentally, to point a valuable moral for the future.

The latter is the main motive underlying this book, and I claim that the record shows indisputably that Burns did aspire to lead a Labour Party that would look up to him as its pontiff, and when he discovered that the Labour Party had developed a mind of its own, and preferred to listen to other advisers, then, in his chagrin, unable to bear a rival or rivals near his throne, he advertised by his conduct in Parliament that he was ready to take the Liberal shilling and to do his utmost to defeat the movement which had denied him the opportunity of domination. All this is, I believe, made clear in my book, and, I now add that if the determined hostility originally evinced by Burns to the Labour Party in the House of Commons

has been modified in expression, it is because it eventually dawned on his superiors in the Cabinet, that every antagonistic demonstration made by Burns simply strengthened the Labour Party in the House and in the country, which induced them to adopt a more insidious and more dangerous policy —the policy against which my moral is directed. That moral is not elaborated in this book ; indeed it is only hinted at in the closing paragraph, mainly because it is intended some day to work it out in a sequel, but I will state it more fully here.

The Labour Party, so it seems to me, is in peril of sinning collectively in the same way that Burns sinned individually. I do not believe any of its present Socialist leaders are ambitious to follow Burns into the bondage of office, but I do feel there is a danger that, despite their Socialism, the Labour Party may become purely a reforming party, living from hand to mouth on palliatives. In its legislative capacity it is too like the left wing of the Radical Party. Indeed, with some half-dozen exceptions, one could select from amongst the Radicals forty men more advanced than the ruck of the Labour Party. This has got to be altered. Either the Socialist members of the Labour Party must bring their colleagues forward, or they must themselves form an advanced group with the liberty, which they do not now enjoy, to ventilate their Socialist views in the House of Commons. Unless one or the other of these alternatives be chosen the Labour Party may follow John Burns into the maw of all-devouring Liberalism. Whereupon will ensue sterility, as in his sad case.

For the final condemnation of Burns will not really be that he set himself to side-track Labourism into the camp of Liberalism. True, Burns does deserve condemnation for that phase of his development, and history will, I am sure, censure him for deserting Labour at such a crisis in its fortunes to play the game of those whose aim always has been to make abortive every attempt to organise a really Independent Labour Party. But his uncondoned condemnation will be that all the high hopes he professed to cherish when he took office were blasted, because he fell into the hands of the permanent officials, the bureaucrats who proved cleverer and more persistent than himself, and that consequently he developed into the most reactionary President of the Local Government Board in our history, so reactionary, indeed, that he earned the praises of Mr. Walter Long for carrying through policies that that Tory ex-President of the Local Government Board would never have dared to attempt. The Labour Party does not intend to reduce itself to a similar absurdity of futility. Neither did Burns. Doubtless he proposed to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm, and the Labour M.P.'s mean to do great things. But they will never begin to do them by subordinating their Socialism. Their real work is not constructive statesmanship but persistent propaganda—the preaching of the ideal, in Parliament as well as out, the constant presentation to the public of what is desirable to be accomplished. Their mission is educative. When public opinion has been sufficiently permeated by Socialist principles

the practical statesmen will find a way to carry out the mandate given.

It is because I grieve that John Burns fell from his high estate as an Agitator, and because I fear the Labour M.P.'s may make the same error, that this book has come into being. I am conscious that I have not realised all I desired to do, but if I have warned the Parliamentary Labour Party to avoid the slippery slopes of Avernus the effort made, even with all its imperfections, will not have been altogether in vain.

JOSEPH BURGESS.

April 1911.

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JOHN BURNS

HIS RISE AND PROGRESS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Now that the General Election of 1935 has resulted in the return of 370 Socialist Members of Parliament, giving a clear majority of 70 over all the groups forming the Capitalist Combination, it has occurred to me that the time is propitious to put on record the early and inner history of the age-long evolution of the Socialist Party.

Its continually increasing strength has been chronicled by contemporary annalists. You may tabulate the dry-as-dust statistics from the Year Books. They will tell you how, at the General Election of 1906, the Labour Party, from which the Socialist Party evolved, made a dramatic debut, 30 members strong, in the Parliamentary arena. How, at the General Election of 1910, its strength was increased to 40 votes by the adhesion of the Miners' Federation M.P.'s, previously classified as Liberals. And you may discover, if you pay particular attention to the footnotes, that the nominal gain really represented a net loss of five members.

But the Year Books will not explain, nor can

you find the explanation in any contemporary record, how it came to pass that (taking advantage of the granting of Payment of Members and Official Election Expenses at the second General Election of 1910) by the General Election of 1919, the Labour Party had been transmuted into a Socialist Party; nor why, since the moment that clear line of demarcation between the Unified Socialists and the then orthodox political parties was drawn, the British Socialist Party has enjoyed an uninterrupted career of success.

You will not learn about that in the Year Books, but if you care to study this veracious account of the inner history of the British Labour movement from 1885 to 1905, and its sequel, which will describe the Socialist evolution from 1905 to 1935, you will obtain the information.

Socialists did not come into their own until 1920, when, for the first time an avowed Socialist Party appeared in Parliament; but twenty-five years earlier, in 1885, the Social Democratic Federation, the original British Socialist organisation, nominated John Burns in West Nottingham. At that time I was in my twenty-fifth year.

During the whole of the fifty years since I have been intimately associated with the Labour and Socialist movement. Not that I figured as a leader. I was never in the limelight, but it was my duty, if the figure of speech be permissible, to direct the rays of the lantern of publicity on the succession of men and women who did, for longer or shorter periods, occupy the centre of the stage. To be plain, I have been associated with the movement in the capacity of a journalist. And now that the Socialist Party is dominant in Parliament, and in a position to begin the building of the edifice of the Socialist State, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to tell the story of the half-

century during which its foundations were laboriously laid. So much, at least, is due from me to posterity, and it is my sincerest desire that I may be spared until I have done that work.

It was in Nottingham that I first became associated with Labour and Socialist journalism. For some years, after a boyhood spent in the lace factories, I had held a position on a local evening paper. It was in financial difficulties all the time; its staff was but a make-shift—which may account for my rapid promotion to the sub-editorship, and, ultimately, the paper had to be sold.

Fortunately for me there was, just then, a Nottingham lace manufacturer itching to become a newspaper proprietor. After a somewhat loose life, this gentleman became fanatically religious. He was a great admirer of the Rev. T. De Witt Talmage, of Brooklyn, and had been paying a subsidy to a local weekly for the privilege of publishing a Talmage sermon every Saturday. It occurred to him that, as the evening paper was going cheap, he might utilise it as a daily pulpit. Anyhow, he bought it, lock, stock, and barrel, and converted it into what he regarded as a model paper. He refused to allow racing quotations. Brewers' advertisements were rejected. The theatres got no notices. To crown all, there was the daily column of sermon!

Naturally, not even the abounding cash balance of a rich owner could long sustain such an abortion of a newspaper. But he was, in his own way, a bit of a sportsman. He did not like to own he was beaten, and for two years he stood the financial drain. Those years were, on the whole, good years for me. I was promoted to the editorship, got married on my increased salary, and was able to save a few pounds against the time when the inevitable crash came. Then I got orders to put

up the shutters, and, with a quarter's salary in lieu of notice, found myself out of a situation.

In these circumstances, the wife and I determined to make an effort to establish a weekly Labour paper. I undertook to be, all in my own person, manager, advertisement canvasser, reporter, and editor. She had had experience in the office of the defunct evening paper, where I first became acquainted with her, and was quite certain she could keep the books and collect the accounts, and that we could jointly see the paper published. As for the printing, that might be jobbed. It all seemed simple—and so it was, though in another sense; and on these lines we began to issue *The Nottingham Operative*, the first Labour paper published in the Provinces.

I am not writing a history of that ill-fated enterprise; I am merely explaining how I became associated with John Burns. Suffice it to say, so far as the *Operative* is concerned, that in four months my giddy career as a newspaper proprietor began and ended. Those four months, however, covered the period of the General Election of 1885, and, in a sense, it was the General Election that tempted me into the speculation.

The General Election of 1885, you may remember, was the first after the Franchise had been extended to householders in counties. Since 1869, the year after the Franchise was conferred on householders in boroughs, there had been talk about Labour representation. The Trades Congress of 1869, meeting in Birmingham, passed a resolution in favour of the direct representation of the Trade Unions in Parliament. In 1871 Mr. Gladstone tried to placate the Unions by recognising their status in law, but this step had been so bitterly opposed by the Manchester School of Liberal politicians that in 1874 the Labour

Representation League, formed by the Trades Congress, nominated fourteen candidates for Parliament. Of these, two, Thomas Burt and Alexander Macdonald were successful. In 1880 they were joined by Henry Broadhurst. And now, in 1885, quite a number of Labour candidates were seeking to enter Parliament. True, all these Labour candidates were Liberals, or, as it became the fashion to term them later on, "Lib.-Labs." Still, the fact that so many working men contested seats at the General Election of 1885 will testify to the feeling of unrest that was abroad at the time I was projecting *The Nottingham Operative*.

Moreover, what was relevant to my enterprise locally, there was to be something more revolutionary than a Labour candidate in Nottingham. The Nottingham Branch of the Social Democratic Federation announced that it intended to nominate John Burns, of Battersea, as a candidate for the West Division, and it was this that proved the deciding factor in persuading me to publish *The Nottingham Operative*. I argued that the excitement of the Parliamentary contest would provide me with a good opportunity to float the paper—as the Liberal and Tory papers would probably boycott Burns's meetings, and leave me the field to exploit. And so I launched my little craft.

I was the more encouraged to do this because I knew that Burns would make things lively in Nottingham. Some months before, while I was editing the evening paper, I had been struck by a speech he delivered during the sittings of the Nottingham Triennial Conference of the A.S.E. I had thought so much of this speech that I gave it a column of space, much to the disgust of my proprietor, who declared that he had not bought the paper to make a pulpit for revolutionary Socialism. The fact is, I was becoming infected with

Socialism myself. I seldom missed an opportunity of hearing the Socialist speakers brought down by the Nottingham S.D.F., and was, as you may see, quite ripe for such a mad enterprise as that on which I entered.

But perhaps it was not such a mad enterprise after all. True, it caused me for many years to have to struggle against harassing poverty, but what guarantee have I that any other course would have served me better? Certainly, none would have fitted me so well for the work I am now doing.

Anyhow, be that as it may, the speculation, wise or otherwise, left me with a file of the *Operative* in my possession, and from its columns I am enabled to reconstitute a picture of John Burns in 1885—what he was like, and what were the views he advocated.



JOHN BURNS (as in 1885)

CHAPTER II

JOHN BURNS IN 1885

MY first issue of the *Operative* after the Dissolution of Parliament was announced, was a "Burns" number, with a portrait. I turn up the paper containing that portrait, and this is what I see.

A young man—he was only twenty-seven at the time—strongly built, leaning negligently on a photographer's escritoire. In his right hand he holds, so that the title may be read, a copy of *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation. His left hand, with the fist gripped, rests on his hip. He is dressed plainly, but has not yet assumed the reefer jacket that became his daily wear later on.

He is distinctly good-looking. Indeed, then and always, Burns was inordinately proud of his face and figure. He frequently alluded to his physical advantages as an excuse for lack of modesty. In Battersea, he said, modesty was only necessary for those who had no beauty.

In this portrait Burns's hair is still raven black, and his beard and moustache, as always, hide the lower face and mouth. The upper features are good. The forehead is broad and ample. Black and full eyebrows shade deeply set eyes. The nose is adequate. Altogether, the picture is a striking one, and gives the impression of a man who might be trusted to go far.

And already, at twenty-seven years of age, Burns had shown that he intended to make a mark on

the world. While still an engineer's apprentice, he had suffered arrest for defending free speech on Clapham Common. Those were the days of his association with the Temperance movement. As soon as he was out of his time he had gone to Africa for a year, working on the River Niger. On the journey home he made a Continental tour. On settling down in Battersea, he soon became known in connection with most of the public movements of the day, lecturing frequently in most of the workmen's clubs. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Radical Federation, sat on the Committee of the Land Restoration League, was elected a Vice-President of the Scottish Land Restoration League, and became a member of the Workmen's Peace Society Council and moved an amendment to the resolution demanding war with Russia at the "Jingo" meeting held at Hyde Park. He also took an active part in the agitation for the protection of young girls, which followed upon Stead's Maiden Tribute exposures, and spoke at the great Hyde Park demonstration. These activities were in addition to his work for the A.S.E., and preliminary to his membership of the S.D.F., on the Executive of which he was sitting at the time he contested Nottingham in 1885.

After stating these facts about Burns's public work, I went on to quote, to show the kind of man he was, from his speeches and articles in *Justice*.

The first notice I was able to find of Burns there was of his presence as a delegate of the Social Democratic Federation, at a meeting in favour of assisted emigration, held in the Kennington Vestry Hall, and reported in *Justice* for 5th July 1884. At this meeting Burns told the peers and parsons on the platform that the real reason why they wanted to ship off the people was because they were afraid of the Social Revolution in this country.

The next issue of *Justice* contained an article on "Our Mining Population," written by Burns. In this article Burns described the conditions under which miners worked, and concluded as follows:—

"Their individuality is completely crushed out, and they have become, as Shelley says, but 'mechanised automata,' simply profit-making machines to build up large fortunes for the mine-owner, who, whilst his men are working under such brutal conditions, is luxuriating on the shores of the Mediterranean, or gliding up the Bosphorus in a steam yacht, purchased out of the unpaid labour of the miners."

In the issue of *Justice* of 13th September, 1884, Burns wrote on "The Trades Union Congress" as follows:—

"The Congress has been patted upon the back often enough for its moderation by Tory and Liberal. This, from a worker's point of view, is a sure sign of its impotence and general inability to cope with the difficulties that are daily brought about by the profit-mongering system of to-day, which both parties are desirous of perpetuating in their own interests, but to the disadvantage of those who toil. The Congress should measure its duty to the workers, not by the compliments bestowed on its decisions by landlords and capitalists, but, on the contrary, by the amount of disapprobation that their resolutions receive from their worst enemies—those who rob the labourers on the land, in the mines and factories.

"All this must be expected in the future if the social conditions of the people are to be determined and regulated by a wealthy few who have 'nobbled' the press, who make the laws and own the lawyers, who control Parliament, hold the reins of Government, and thus keep the property they have stolen from their poorer brethren. In any country where there is absolute political equality,

unaccompanied by the collective ownership of those factors of a really civilised national existence—the land, banks, railways, mines, and other productive and distributive agents—poverty will ever be rampant. To make men politically free, you must first make them socially independent. Tory and Liberal alike have had their day; it is now time that the labourers asserted their rights and insisted upon them."

My next quotation was from "An Open Letter to Trade Unionists," which appeared, signed, "John Burns," in *Justice* for 24th January, 1885. In this letter Burns sketched the position of Trade Unionism.

"Never," he said, "in the history of Unionism were its prospects so gloomy as now. The old methods of persecution and intimidation have been revived in the most subtle forms; men, under fear of dismissal (which now means starvation) are compelled to sever their connection with their Unions. Whole societies have been crushed out through their inability to stand against the drain on their limited resources, whilst the larger Unions, whose members are heavily levied, are suffering severely through the same cause. . . . The remedy is not to be found in smooth words or plausible transitory panaceas from the owning class. It can only be secured by the workers demanding their full share of the wealth they produce, and insisting upon their right to live like men, and be citizens of an industrial commonwealth."

I clenched these quotations from Burns's articles and speeches by telling the story of how he was victimised for attending the Industrial Remuneration Conference, held at the Princes Hall, London, on the 28th, 29th and 30th January, 1885. That Conference had been convened to consider the following reference:—

"What are the best means, consistent with justice and equity, for bringing about a more equal division of the daily products of industry between Capital and Labour, so that it may become possible for all to enjoy a fair share of material comfort and intellectual culture, possible for all to lead a dignified life, and less difficult for all to lead a good life."

Burns, Jack Williams, and James Macdonald were delegates of the Social Democratic Federation to that Conference, and on the third day, in the course of a speech, Burns made the following statement:—

"As workers they had been told there was freedom to-day. He was sorry to say that the fact of his coming to that Conference as a delegate for the Social Democratic Federation had secured his dismissal from the factory in which he had worked. ('Shame.') Where was the freedom in that? Was not that slavery? The remedy, the Socialist contended, was not only the nationalisation of land, capital, and credit, but proper means of production, distribution, and exchange, and thus stop the robbery which they were subject to. Would they combine with the proletariat of Europe who had embraced Socialistic principles, or take the side of might against right? They would soon have to answer that question. A revolution was germinating in the bowels of society through the inequalities of condition which prevailed. To the middle class he would say—Will you guide this revolution, or be driven by it, or try to suppress it by force? If you do the latter, upon you rests the responsibility for the strife that is coming—the responsibility of pushing back the hopes and aspirations of the workmen of the world."

These quotations served to introduce Burns's

Election Address, in which he laid down the following ten planks as his platform :—

1. Free Education, compulsory on all classes, together with the provision of at least one meal a day in Board Schools.
2. Eight hours or less to be the working day in all trades.
3. Adult Suffrage.
4. Payment of Members and all Official Expenses at Elections.
5. Abolition of the House of Lords and of all hereditary authorities.
6. Triennial Parliaments.
7. Legislative Independence for Ireland.
8. Free Justice.
9. Nationalisation and Municipalisation of Land, Mines, Railways, Machinery, and Banks.
10. The power of declaring war, making peace, and making treaties to be vested directly in the people.

These principles, he added, he laid before the electors as a Labour Candidate and a Social Democrat, in the firm belief that only by a thorough change in the social and political system could the producing classes be benefitted.

He concluded with a declaration that he was a man of No Compromise. To compromise a principle was, he considered, to betray a cause and to delude a people, and if they did him the honour to return him to the House of Commons, he would stand firm to his programme in Parliament as he had done out of it.

Burns was so pleased with this issue of the *Operative* that he came to the office to thank me for it, and brought with him Mr. H. H. Champion, whom I must now introduce.



H. H. CHAMPION

CHAPTER III

HENRY HYDE CHAMPION

MR. HENRY HYDE CHAMPION was one of the men who played an important part in the early developments of the Labour and Socialist movements in this country to whom Fortune was far from kind. Even now, fifty years after the events I am narrating, John Burns and Keir Hardie are household names. But the man who introduced both Burns and Hardie to political life, in which they made such astounding successes, was H. H. Champion, and his name, I fear, has no significance to the men and women of this generation, and is but a memory to those of mine.

But Champion had not only the honour to be godfather, politically, to the two earliest Tribunes of the Socialist movement, but was one of those who carried the seeds of Socialism to Australia. In 1894 he settled down in Melbourne, driven from England partly by ill-health, partly by ill-fortune in the enterprises it is my duty to describe. In 1910, sixteen years later, a Labour Administration came into power in the Commonwealth; in 1920 the Labour Government became avowedly a Socialist Government, and its experience and success had much to do with bringing about similar developments here. It is only due to Champion to say that he was one of the main factors that brought into existence, first, the Australian Labour Party, second, the Australian Socialist Party.

But of course all this was in the future on that day in 1885 when Burns brought Champion into my office. All that I knew of him then was that he was the son of a Major-General, that he had served as an artillery officer, but had thrown up his commission during the Egyptian War of 1882, giving as his reason that it was beneath the dignity of an officer and a gentleman to be called upon to act virtually as a bum-bailiff for the Egyptian bond-holders. After a period of unemployment, Mr. Champion, who was a poor man—which made his sacrifice of a career in the army all the more creditable—secured a post as sub-editor of an influential monthly magazine. Concurrently, he identified himself with the Social Democrats, to whom his spirited action in throwing up his commission warmly commended him. So much, and no more, I already knew of the man who was destined to have such an influence on the development of the movement for Labour representation; for it was more in connection with Labour representation than Socialist representation that his activities eventually turned.

Burns entered my office in that breezy manner which always distinguished him, and introduced Champion. There was nothing striking about his personal appearance. Early training and military discipline had moulded Champion according to the conventional pattern common in the purlieus of Pall Mall. He was the artillery officer in mufti. In temperament he remained the artillery officer, a trait which largely accounted for his failures in the British Labour movement, a movement dogmatically democratic. I do not need to more than summarise the conversation that ensued. Indeed, were it not for one result of the visit, it would be unnecessary to describe this incident at any length.

Burns hoped that I would continue to give him a good show in the *Operative*, and I promised to

endeavour to do so. Champion asked me about its prospects, and I painted them in as rosy colours as my conscience would permit. Then we diverged to discuss the recently established organ of the Social Democrats, *Justice*, and Burns told me how the comrades had given that paper a boom by all turning out to sell it in Fleet Street, the Strand, Piccadilly, and other leading London thoroughfares.

"You would scarcely believe it," he said, "to look at Champion, but I assure you that he walked the kerb with the rest, crying out '*Justice*, one penny; the Organ of Social Democracy!'"

I said it was a noble thing to do, but did not anticipate any such help to the *Operative*.

"You don't need it in Nottingham, I hope," said Champion. "The General Election ought to float you into deep water. As for the kerb-walking, as Burns calls it, that was a small matter for a man like me to do when such a giant in literature as William Morris turned out. Besides, there was Hyndman, and Herbert Burrows, and Hunter Watts, and many others of what you may call the top-hat brigade."

So we talked off and on for a time, and then, as Burns and Champion were preparing to leave, I broached the question which alone makes this conversation worth recording.

"Mr. Champion," I said, "there is one matter I would like clearing up before you go. I am, as I have assured you, quite willing to advance Burns's candidature so far as faithful reports in the *Operative* will do it. But I should be of far more service could I conscientiously advocate his claims in its editorial columns."

"Well," said Champion, on my pausing, "what is the difficulty?"

"Just this," I replied; "you must be aware that the question as to the source of Burns's election

expenses is being freely discussed. The Liberals suggest that they are coming from the Carlton Club, and that his candidature is a mere device to split the working-class vote and allow the Tory to slip in?"

"Do you believe it?"

"It is hard to know what to believe. That the Tories would be quite willing to bribe the Social Democrats I can understand. But bribery requires a taker as well as offerer, and I am loth to believe that the Social Democrats would be privy to any such tactics. Give me assurances on that point, and I am with you whole-heartedly, for, though I have not yet definitely acknowledged myself to be a Social Democrat, I am beginning to see that it is a big step in the right direction."

"That is a fair proposition," said Champion, "and if you will excuse me for a moment I think I shall be able to satisfy your scruples."

A whispered conversation with Burns ensued, whereupon I suggested that I might leave them alone for a few minutes.

"Don't mention it," said Champion, "the matter is settled. We have agreed to take you into our fullest confidence. But, as it involves another person's secret, you must pledge yourself never, unless you have his and our consent, to reveal that person's identity. Do you agree?"

"Certainly."

"Then can you spare to-morrow to accompany me on a journey?"

I explained that it would be at some inconvenience, as practically everything was depending upon me, but, as it happened, the morrow was my easiest day, and I would place it at his disposal.

"Very well, then," said Champion, "if you will meet me at my hotel at nine sharp, we will be just in time to get a quick train."

The next day I called on Champion as arranged. He sent for a hansom, and we drove to the station.

On our way I learned that we had quite a long journey to make. It was noon when we arrived.

We drove up to our destination. It was a large house within a spacious park. The mansion was not visible from the lodge gates, but at a distance of a quarter of a mile up the winding drive we caught a glimpse of the turrets of a palatial edifice towering over the intervening trees.

"Your friend keeps up considerable style," I observed.

"This is nothing," Champion replied. "Wait until you see the interior of the house. And all out of soap!"

That was the first intimation that the goal of our journey was the lordly domain of a successful soap manufacturer. My curiosity was, however, now sharply whetted, and in answer to my questions Champion informed me that we were about to call upon Mr. Barlow, proprietor of the celebrated Bay Soap. Barlow, he explained, was an old University chum. They had been as Damon and Pythias for years, though one was as rich as Midas and the other as poor as the proverbial church mouse. "Of course," he added, "I don't need to say that I am the mouse."

Whereupon he laughed to himself, as if he entertained quite a different opinion. Certainly, whatever else he might be, H. H. Champion had no intention to play the part of mouse.

As our hansom drove up to the house, Mr. Barlow, a slight, dark, and handsome man, who had had a note from Champion to apprise him of our visit, and a telephonic message from the lodge gates to say that we had entered the park, made his appearance at the door and welcomed Champion with an affection seldom evinced by grown men.

His manner towards me was full of good fellowship, and put me at my ease immediately.

Doubtless he could see that I was somewhat over-faced by the grandeur of his surroundings. Such a place I had never visited before. I could, even at this distance of time, write columns descriptive of its architectural and art glories, but forbear.

Nor will I dilate on the delicious lunch that was served, though it was one of those feasts which, as the first of its kind, one always remembers. There is matter more germane to my story to tell, and with that I must, perforce, be content.

As Champion in the warning letter written overnight had not only told Mr. Barlow of our visit, but also of its purport, that gentleman, when our creature comforts had been attended to, was able to immediately plunge into the heart of our business.

What he said, however, I must reserve for another chapter.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIALIST MILLIONAIRE—BURNS DEFIES THE LIBERALS

"I CAN quite understand your position," said Mr. Barlow, when we had settled down, "and it is essential that you should understand mine. You see me here surrounded by every sign of great wealth. And, as a matter of fact, I am what is called a rich man. My wealth is not due to my own exertions, but it would be very easily imperilled by my own carelessness. I inherited a business from my father which has, as you may be aware, ramifications in every corner of the British Isles."

"Not to mention beyond the seas," interpolated Champion.

"Yes," continued Barlow, "we also do a fair amount of foreign trade, but that does not come into our discussion. It is in no danger from any indiscretion committed here. But our home trade, on which I depend for the largest part of my income, does undoubtedly run some risk of damage should it ever become known that I am financing the political schemes of our mutual friend, Champion. But I am taking that risk which, with prudence, need not be great, and have agreed to finance the candidature of this young fellow Burns, which will only cost me a few hundreds—a mere bagatelle. Moreover, I am also willing to assist in similar enterprises in the future. I do so with mixed motives. I do not mind confessing that the system which enables me to live so luxuriously here

while so many men, quite as good and able as I am, starve, does not commend itself to me as one that can last. That is why I have become a member of the Fabian Society. But I am financing Burns, and am prepared to finance others, principally out of the regard I have for Champion. Whatever I do, however, must not be made public, since that might kill the goose that lays the golden eggs. You understand?"

"I think I do. You fear that the sales of Bay Soap might fall off were it known that a part of the profits was being devoted to the financing of Socialist candidates for Parliament?"

"Precisely. You grasp the idea. Still, if I can assist Champion to a career worthy of his abilities, I am prepared to run the risk. I was awfully annoyed when he threw up his commission in the army. It was a quixotic thing to do. But there is no use crying over spilt milk. So, for old time's sake, when he came to me with his idea of forming a new political party, with himself as its Parnell, I said to him—'Go ahead. You always had the brains, and as I, luckily, have got the shekels, you can draw on me for anything in reason. But you must keep my name out of it.' That's all. Are you satisfied?"

What else could I be? How was it possible for me to doubt Mr. Barlow's *bona fides*? I left his mansion pledged, firstly, to secrecy so far as he was concerned, and, secondly, to do all I could to help forward Burns' candidature at West Nottingham.

I returned to Nottingham the same night. Champion, however, stayed till the following morning with Mr. Barlow. I had also a warm invitation to remain, but the work waiting for me at home left me no alternative but to depart at once.

The Burns campaign need not be described in detail. Its chief importance consists in that it was the first Parliamentary contest fought by British Social Democrats.

From the secondary and personal point of view, its interest lies in its being the starting point of John Burns' chameleon career as a Parliamentarian.

Of course it was the Liberal cue to represent Burns as a paid agent of the Carlton Club sent down simply to split the working class vote, but he retorted with a Roland for their Oliver, alleging that a prominent Liberal had called upon him at his lodgings, and hinted at a monetary inducement to withdraw from the contest.

This gentleman, whom Burns exposed to public identification by saying he was a late member of the Town Council, had—Burns said—fearing his candidature if persisted in might endanger the seat for the Liberal candidate, Colonel Seely, hinted that his object in calling was to have a friendly chat over the situation with the view to making preliminary negotiations for some other person to complete.

"I told him," said Burns, "that his visit would be futile, as I had pledged myself to my future constituents, and therefore declined to accept any negotiations from either the Liberal or Tory parties.

"It is absolutely necessary," continued Burns, "in view of the gross misrepresentation to which I have been subjected by the Liberal Party with regard to my being bribed by the Tories, that I should make public a visit and transaction of this kind, in order that the working men and others may see that Liberals as well as Tories are willing to offer bribes, or to use other backstairs influence to achieve their object when libel fails."

The letter from which I am quoting closed with a characteristic Burns' declaration.

"The man," he concluded, "who declined to negotiate, or, in plain Nottingham language, refused to be 'greased,' was John Burns, the Labour candidate for the Western Division, and who now states that any visitor to his lodgings, in an unofficial capacity or otherwise, will have to go through a lively five minutes should he call for the express purpose of inducing me to withdraw from the contest, which must and will be fought out to the end."

Probably what Burns meant by "a lively five minutes" was a round or two at fisticuffs, for he was inordinately proud of his proficiency in the art of self-defence. He had, he was fond of saying, slept with a prize-fighter.

As matters turned out, the feeling excited by his defiance became so warm that Burns himself had to go through a lively five minutes on his way to a meeting in the Mechanics' Institute, held on the 20th November.

When Burns arrived at the Institute, it was noticed that his lips were bleeding. The chairman explained that the candidate would not be able to speak long as, since he left home, some villain had struck him in the mouth, but, "cost what it might—life included—the battle would still be fought to a finish."

Burns, who was enthusiastically received, apologised for the disadvantage under which he was labouring, but, he added, it would take more than a cowardly villain's fist coming in contact with his mouth to detain him.

Then he went on with his speech, speaking at his usual length. It was an electioneering speech, in which he seemed most anxious to emphasise that he was a Labour candidate, and complained that the Liberals were asking his friends on Labour organisations to rebut his candidature. He men-

tioned that he was so acceptable as a Labour candidate that Mr. T. R. Threlfall, who that year was the chairman of the Trades Union Congress, had written to apologise for non-attendance, and expressed the strongest hopes that he would be returned. With regard to the efforts that were being made to induce him to retire, he told the working men that night, as he had told them weeks ago, that come weal, come woe, John Burns, the Labour candidate, would never retire. It had been said that he had come to Nottingham to split the party, but there was no party for the labourers in the field, and he asked them whether a Labour candidate of advanced views would be likely to meet the views of the caucus. He was called a Tory tool, but did a Tory tool speak as he had done on behalf of the people; was a Tory tool the man to be imprisoned for advocating the right to free speech on public commons? Feargus O'Connor and George Odger were called in their day, as Lloyd Jones and John Burns were now called, Tory tools, but it was through the advanced men of the Liberal Party that the country had won the liberties they enjoyed that day, and, with the help of the electors he meant to go in the same direction, and achieve a victory which would make all proud of the principles of the lace manufacturing town of Nottingham.

Mr. Champion also spoke, but he dealt solely with the efforts of the Liberals to get Burns to withdraw.

There can be no doubt that the Liberals suffered a serious fright, but how little reason they had for their panic was demonstrated by the result of the poll, which was declared as follows:—

Colonel Seely (Lib.)	.	.	.	6609
E. Cope (Con.)	.	:	:	3797
John Burns (Soc.)	:	:	:	598

And so ended the first provincial campaign of the Social Democratic Federation. And with it concluded my journalistic connection with Nottingham.

During the actual campaign, the *Operative* had profited by the interest aroused. It was in its columns that the fullest reports of the Social Democratic meetings could be obtained. Thus, for a time, all seemed plain sailing.

But when the election was over, the slump commenced. It was something awful. Worse still, the Liberal advertisers began a boycott. The culmination came in an action for libel.

There was a notorious debt collector in the town, and his methods I had ridiculed in a set of satirical verses. He stumped into my office the day after publication, and purchased three copies. These he marked in my presence and retired.

The next I heard of him was in a lawyer's letter claiming £1000 damages for libel. Close on this came a communication from my printer, on whom a similar legal document had been served. The poor man was nearly demented. The case must be settled at once, or it would be his ruin.

"Well," I said, "I'm sorry to have got you into this mess, but I can't get you out. You must take your own course."

He did so. He refused to print another issue of my paper, and made peace with mine enemy by paying £20 and costs incurred.

And so came to an end my brief, inglorious career as a newspaper proprietor.

In these circumstances the wife and I determined to remove to London. There was surely a living to be picked up there, we reasoned.

And there was ! Such a living !

CHAPTER V

OUR FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF LONDON: WE MEET BURNS IN HYDE PARK

COMING to such an ignominious collapse in my newspaper enterprise, it will be easily understood that when we migrated to London the wife and I had not much money in our joint purse.

As a matter of fact, all we possessed was the proceeds of the sale of the greater part of our household goods.

Like most provincials, we had, on setting up a home, been what is called "house-proud." Our furniture was good, and, when the *Operative* ceased publication, constituted our sole asset. From the sale we reserved just sufficient to barely furnish two rooms.

Those two rooms we were fortunate enough to find in Wine Office Court, Fleet Street. There were three or four houses there, subsequently occupied as offices, that were then tenement dwellings. On the third floor of one of these we set up our domicile.

Our living room overlooked the "Cheshire Cheese," then in its palmy days. Often have I and the wife sat at the window whence we could see the landlord mixing the famous pie. And there, too, we enjoyed many a free concert contributed by the Bohemian habitués on a Saturday night.

On the whole I think of those days of our early

sojourn in London as our happiest. We were poor, but we were young. And there was so much to see and to learn !

Neither of us had visited London before. It was to us a new world, and we explored it conscientiously, and with never-failing zest.

On our first Sunday we started off up Fleet Street, turned into the Temple opposite Chancery Lane, and reached the Embankment, that noble promenade then recently reclaimed from the mud of the Thames for the benefit of the ground landlords.

As we strolled along, with the wide sweep of the mighty river on our left, and on our right the palatial hotels and public buildings in all their superb proportions, with every detail of decoration displayed by the unclouded sun, I felt a degree of enlargement such as I had never experienced in my native town.

What struck me most were the open spaces and the parks. I had ignorantly assumed London to be awfully congested. I had imagined the Cockneys as a race cribbed, cabined, and confined in endless rows of houses. Similarly, the Cockney imagined provincials all lived in country lanes, in cottages embowered in honeysuckle, amid green fields.

The reality was very different. London has been immensely improved since the eighties, but even then there were districts in the Metropolis that surpassed any provincial manufacturing town that I knew for foliage and open spaces.

I and the wife were amazed with what we saw in our ramble through the Green Park and St. James's Park to Hyde Park. With the Houses of Parliament and the glorious Abbey we were familiar from pictures. But the flowers and the trees, the lakes, and the long stretches of greensward, free from the objectionable warnings not to walk on the grass

which were so common in provincial parks—these were a revelation to us, and delighted our souls.

Added to this surprising mixture of sylvanity and civilisation, we had the consciousness that we were breathing the same air, and had the possibility of holding personal communion with men and women prominent in the political, literary, and art worlds.

Speaking for myself, I had never been a student of Nature. I loved to be amongst trees and flowers, but had never experienced any particular curiosity to know which tree might be an oak or a beech, and beyond roses and buttercups and daisies, it would have puzzled me to name a single specimen of the flowers and fragrances in which I delighted. It had never occurred to me to inquire. The flowers and the trees were there, their rustle and their incense satisfied, I loved to watch the lofty plumes bending to the unseen breeze, I loved to note the harmonious colouring of the opening flowers, but to label and classify them—that had been beyond my ambition.

Not so with men and women, with human nature, the noblest work of God. I had delighted in the study of character, in the classification of individuals, in noting how well-defined mannerisms were unconsciously reproduced. I had quite a gallery of provincial portraits in my mind, and could diagnose how certain people would act in given circumstances as accurately as if my own soul inhabited their bodies.

Now I had an opportunity to widen my field of observation, and to bring within its purview men and women of, I thought, more importance than mere provincials. I learned later that it was the material in which men worked that made their relative positions, that there was quite as much intellect displayed in managing a Town Council as

in controlling a Cabinet, but that one man moulded in clay while another carved in marble.

Absorbing our new impressions, for the wife and I, like all good companions, could be eloquently silent, we reached Hyde Park. What we saw there was another revelation.

It is common now for the provincial public parks to be utilised as forums for discussion, but at the time of which I write, the London parks had almost a monopoly of such gatherings, and Hyde Park was supreme over the rest.

There assembled, Sunday after Sunday, all those who, like the Athenians of old, were ever on the look-out for some new doctrine.

The Marble Arch was the modern Mar's Hill. Men of all beliefs and of no beliefs, disciples of the Christian Evidence Society, followers of Charles Bradlaugh, Mormons, Orangemen, Catholics, Revivalists, Anarchists, and Socialists, could be found there, pouring forth a never-ending stream of oratory, passionate, supplicatory, argumentative, reproachful, disdainful, humorous, sarcastic—every conceivable style under heaven.

Here it was, and on this our first Sunday in London, that I again met John Burns. He was in the centre of a big ring, dominated by a red flag, debating with an Individualist. This gentleman had taken exception to Burns's statements in his opening speech, and had been allowed to advance an argument against them. Burns was in the full flow of his reply when the wife and I reached the outer edge of the rapidly-increasing audience.

"This gentleman," he was saying, "has suggested a remedy for the evils I pointed out in my introductory speech. To a Socialist his remedy is a peculiar one. He suggests the moralisation of industry and capital.

"Moralise capital! You might as well try to

moralise the lion that was about to devour the lamb; you might as well attempt to moralise the boa-constrictor that has its coils round the body of its victim. Can you moralise the retired capitalist out of his 300 square miles of deer forest, or out of his steam yacht, or out of his guinea orchid he wears in his button-hole? All such privileged luxuries are secured by the exploitation of labour, and by the prostitution of genius and ability to the very lowest degree.

"Our friend argued that moralisation of capital could be brought about by a system of education. Education has so far enabled the capitalist to import from the realms of science and invention the means by which labour is deprived of its surplus value, and this has been done in the most subtle forms. The genius and ability of our greatest men has been prostituted by landlord and the capitalist in their service, and against the interest of the proletariat.

"What sense is there in pleading, as our friend has done, that many capitalists have done a great deal for their employees? Yes; but at whose expense? From what source? Have the capitalists some hidden source from which they secure their wealth, which, he has said, they devote to the improvement of the condition of their workers? No; they first get it from labour, or from rent, or from profits.

"There was no way of stopping such robbery," he concluded, "except by nationalisation of land, capital, and credit."

As the meeting was dispersing Burns caught sight of my wife and I. He came over to us, and we walked in the direction of Hyde Park Corner.

"How did you like it," he inquired. "Didn't I double him up?" Burns was always hungry for praise.

I duly congratulated him on his effort, and then he inquired about our affairs. I told him where we were living, and asked him to call, and to bring Mrs. Burns, whose acquaintance my wife had made in Nottingham. I was afraid, I added, that the wife would find London very lonely, and a difficult place in which to make friends.

"Not at all," said Burns. "You must join the Democratic Club. I don't go very much myself, as Battersea is quite a long distance away, and I am not a clubable man, but you are near to Chancery Lane, where the club is situated. Will you allow me to introduce you?"

I said we would be delighted, and it was arranged that Burns would come up on the following Saturday evening.

"There is always a House Dinner on Saturdays," he said. "The prices are democratic: one shilling for three courses. And to follow there will be one of the finest concerts to be heard in all London."

On this understanding we parted, and the wife and I looked forward with great interest to our introduction to the Democratic Club.

CHAPTER VI

WE ARE INTRODUCED TO THE DEMOCRATS

THE Democratic Club, from 1886 to 1896, was the resort of all those who gave life and being to the advanced movements of the Metropolis. Here assembled those daring spirits who would have ventured on any enterprise, from editing the *Times* to commanding the Channel Fleet. And yet, alas! the Committee were so unbusinesslike that they justified Burns's later jibe, that while they aspired to revolutionise the world, they had not the ability to run a whelk stall.

The first habitation of the club was a basement in Chancery Lane. Here it was located when I first became a member. But I knew the club in two other environments. When, through financial difficulties, the Democratic was turned out of the Chancery Lane premises, the furniture was stored for some months in a pantechnicon. It eventually suggested itself to Bennet Burleigh, the *Telegraph* war correspondent, who bossed the club when not on foreign duty, that to allow it to eat its head off there was bad policy, and a resuscitation took place. This time premises were secured on the upper floors of a suite of offices in Essex Street.

The Essex Street period was the hey-day of the club's prosperity. It covered 1892 and 1893. In 1894 there was another financial crisis, and the furniture had to be sold. But the idea of a

club survived, and a third incarnation occurred in premises over Belcher's Dining Rooms, just between Shoe Lane and Holborn. But the club there was a mere ghost of what it had been in its palmy days, and it died a natural death, to rise no more.

Cunningham Graham, at the time I was introduced to the club, was its only M.P. Graham was not a frequent habitué. At a later period Keir Hardie joined. But in 1886, Hardie's star had not risen above the horizon.

Neither had the world come to know the names of Tom Mann and Ben Tillett, who were lifted into prominence three years later by the Dock Strike. Nor had John Burns much of a reputation then. He had flitted across the political stage at Nottingham the previous year.

Bennet Burleigh, as I have said, was the principal supporter of the club in its Chancery Lane and Essex Street homes. Burleigh, in those days, had a consuming ambition to become an M.P. I remember him fighting three elections, beginning as a Gladstonian-Liberal, then changing over to Liberal-Unionism, and ending as a Labour candidate.

Burleigh had not the political fortune of another old member of the club, who became Sir Henry Dalziel. The luck was with Dalziel after he forced himself on the Kirkcaldy Burghs, one of the finest pieces of bluff ever known. Prior to that Dalziel had had his share of Fortune's buffets. He migrated to the National Liberal immediately he got his foot on the ladder of Parliament, and the Democratic knew him no more.

The club had always a number of pressmen amongst its members. Another journalistic member of the club was W. M. Thompson, barrister, counsel for John Burns on both of his appearances

at the Old Bailey. At the time I became a member of the club Thompson was writing the "Dodo" articles in *Reynolds's*. Some years later he became the editor of that paper, and founded the National Democratic League. Another *Reynolds* writer, John Morrison Davidson, the famous publicist, practically lived in the club. In addition to those named, quite a number of less distinguished journalists were members.

The Democratic, it will be seen, was not a Socialist club. As a matter of fact the leaders of the two then existing Socialist organisations, the Social Democrats and the Fabians, rather fought shy of it. They would come to lecture on the Wednesday evenings, but, like Burns, they spent little time in the club. But a good many of the rank and file of both bodies were members, and gave the club a Socialist tinge. Its general tone was revolutionary—Republicans, Irish Nationalists, and Anarchists were numbered amongst its members. Nihilists, like Stepniak and Volkofsky, came to lecture; Henri Rochefort was its guest at a House dinner; and, to restore the balance, so was Mr. Haldane, in the days before he had become a Cabinet Minister, and was dabbling in Fabian subtleties. It was this variety that constituted the special charm of the Democratic. It was impossible to be dull there, because every shade of opinion—political, social, or religious—was represented amongst its members, who were invariably militant in the proclamation of their opinions.

Naturally, such a place as this became a resort of all who came to the front in the Labour movement. All such men inevitably gravitated to the Democratic. In a word, it was a veritable Cave of Adullam for all who had turned their hands against Society as then constituted.

In addition, the Democratic was one of the

earliest of the Cock and Hen Clubs, and amongst my pleasant recollections are those associated with its lady members.

Eleanor Marx, the favourite daughter of Karl Marx; May Morris, the daughter of William Morris; Mrs. Annie Besant, prior to her Theosophical days—these were among our more prominent members. In addition there were quite a number of ladies living bachelors lives in London, some as artists, some as journalists, some enjoying modest incomes, who found the club very convenient.

I think it was what Burns told me about the lady members that made me so ready to join the club. My wife had no London friends; here, I thought, was a place where she could make acquaintances. And I greatly preferred a resort to which I could take her, for I was not the man to bring a young wife into London from the provinces, away from all her kith and kin, and then desert her while enjoying myself at a club.

So, when Burns looked us up on the Saturday night, we were both quite ready and willing to enter upon our adventures. And quite an adventurous evening, in the sense of making new discoveries, did that Saturday night prove.

Burns, to our disappointment, told us, as he led us down Chancery Lane, that he would not be able to stay at the club. Another engagement had cropped up, for which he was frank enough to say he was not sorry. The fact was, he explained, that he was always bored by the club, and but that he had promised me an introduction, would never have thought of spending the night there. However, he would put us in good hands, and then take his departure.

I said I took it very kindly that he should come all the way from Battersea on our account, and how sorry we were that he could not stay.

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"Don't mention it," he replied, adding the next moment, "We have arrived; follow me."

Burns turned into the passage of a suite of offices, descended to the basement, and we dutifully followed. A long passage similar to the one above, ran from the foot of the stairs. The Democratic Club occupied the rooms all along the right hand side of this passage.

The first door was marked "Democratic Club: enter two doors lower down." Burns went to the door indicated, threw it open, and invited us to enter.

The room into which we entered was the middle one of a suite of three. The ground plan would not be unlike a gigantic letter T. The foot of the letter consisted of a small room through the open door of which we could glimpse a kitchen and bar. The room in which we stood made the narrow stem of the letter. The cross-piece consisted of a large room cut off by hanging curtains, presented, I afterwards learned by William Morris.

Between the kitchen and the club-room there was a great bustle of men and women carrying plates and dishes. These, Burns informed us, were the committee and active members, democratically laying the tables for the Saturday night house dinner. It was, Burns explained, the rule of the club that no waiters were to be employed. A skeleton staff looked after the kitchen and the bar, but all the carrying to and fro, and the waiting at the tables, had to be done by the members themselves.

One of the most active of those engaged in this work was a big, blond fellow, whom Burns addressed as Burleigh. He was holding aloft a heavily-laden tray, and steering his way from the kitchen to the club-room.

"Hello, Jack," he replied. "Just a minute and I'll be with you."

"That is Bennet Burleigh," said Burns. "Demo-

cracy is supposed to rule here, but, as elsewhere, there is a boss, and Burleigh is the man. I will place you under his wing."

When Burleigh returned, we were duly introduced, and then Burns left us to attend to his other engagement.

"Come this way," said Burleigh, leading us into the large room behind the curtains. "There is no ceremony here. Make yourself comfortable; hang your things where you can. I will return to you when the dinner is served."

With this Burleigh hurried off on the business our advent had interrupted. We followed his advice, divested ourselves of our wraps, and sat down waiting events.

There was a large company assembled, but no one seemed to notice our presence. I thought at first it was rudeness. Later on I learned that it was the height of good behaviour. They did not wish to embarrass us, seeing we were strangers, by seeming to notice our presence.

But if they took no notice of us, we were not so indifferent to them. Two long tables occupied the centre of the room, and across the head there was a table for the president and guests. About these tables Burleigh and his fellow-democrats—who happened to be committee men—were busy preparing for the dinner. But, at the foot of the room, round the two fireplaces, a motley gathering of men and women, who were waiting to dine, had assembled.

There were couches along the walls, and large, deep easy chairs before the fires. Disposed on, in, and about were a picturesque crowd of men and women. Those for whom there were not seating accommodation leaned over the backs of the occupied chairs, or sat on the arms thereof.

Many of these free and easy persons were women,

and nearly all were smoking cigarettes. I looked at my wife, and she looked at me. It was the first time we had been in Bohemia, or had seen women under seventy years of age indulging in the weed.

The smoke made the rooms oppressive, but no one seemed to care. The ceilings were low, and although the place was fitted for the electric light, oil lamps were in use. I learned afterwards that the electricity had been cut off to enforce payment of the bill.

We passed a quarter of an hour watching the scene. Then Burleigh came and asked us to occupy seats at the table of honour. He would take no denial. He was chairman, and insisted that my wife and I should be his right and left hand supporters.

Accordingly we took our places, Burleigh ladled out the soup, and the dinner began.

CHAPTER VII

A "HOUSE" DINNER AT THE DEMOCRATIC

ALTHOUGH the wife and I sat on the right and left of Burleigh, it was very little attention he could pay to us while the dinner was in progress. It was his duty to serve the soup, to carve the joint, and to make himself generally agreeable.

So he commended us to our neighbours, who made themselves very agreeable.

My wife was in charge of the secretary of the club, who gave me the impression that he belonged to the ministerial profession. The wife told me afterwards that I was correct. He had been confidential to her on the ground of a fellow provincial feeling, though he came from Belfast. He had there, she said, been in charge of a Congregational Church, but had found himself frozen out by the richer members because of his sympathy with the dockers of that port. He had headed a crusade, so she understood, against the practice of paying wages in public-houses, a matter in which he had the support of his congregation, but when he went on to advocate better conditions and higher remuneration for the men, his deacons and principal financial supporters gave him the cold shoulder. He had come to London, and intended to found a Brotherhood Church as soon as he could. There was, he explained, a derelict Church, with a very sparse membership, in the North of London, which he hoped to capture and convert to his views.

Meantime, he was acting as secretary for the club at a nominal honorarium.

I think it as well to put in the character of the club secretary, lest readers should gather the impression that the Democratic had anything immoral about it. The members were decidedly free in their relations with each other, but it was the freedom of equality and camaraderie, not of loose living. I will not go so far as to say that during the ten years of its existence there was an entire absence of scandal ; one could not say that of even a church. But though unconventional, the moral standard of the Democrats was intrinsically high. Most of the married men brought their wives. Indeed, the club was one happy family.

My right-hand neighbour was a foreign lady, whose name was Madame Delisle. She spoke with a French accent.

"Meester Burleigh," she said, "tells me you are newly come into London ; how like you ze Club ? As we seet here side by side you must let me tell you all about eet."

"You are too kind to me, a perfect stranger," I murmured.

"We meet not as strangers," she replied, "but as freends who may haf been long parted, so long as recollection may haf feeded away, but who haf met before. Deed you not publeesh ze *Nottingham Operative* ? Ah, you see you are not altogether unknown in ze Club. Say not then we are strangers. From to-night we are freends. I must introduce you to mine companion."

Madame introduced her "companion," who, I learned subsequently, was really her companion and secretary, as Agatha Herod. She was a very striking young lady. Her dress was a flowing robe of red, guiltless of corset, loosely bound at her waist by a sash, and carrying only the sparsest

of black lace trimming at the bosom and neck. Long sleeves, hanging wide at the wrists, completed a daring scheme of colour, which only a woman of strong character and great personal attractions could have the courage to conceive or the ability to carry through. That she had a strong character, a glance at her profile convinced me. She seemed capable of great sternness. Her chin and mouth were strongly carved. When she turned to acknowledge my greeting, a smile from her dark eyes modified the first impression.

Madame herself was of a very different type. Her features, strongly marked, were of the Jewish cast. She was richly garbed, with more ostentation of wealth than I noticed in any other person present. But she was good company, and gave me much information about the assembled members.

But while I willingly gave my ears to Madame Delisle, and listened to her good-natured talk, which was mostly about the more distinguished of the men present, my eyes were wandering round the tables, resting here and there on the lady members. They were all so strange to me. And amongst them were some beauties of a more exotic type than had bloomed in our Nottinghamshire gardens. One lady had a most dazzling complexion, heightened by a black pimple on her temple, after the fashion of the beauty spots of a past generation. Another had almost boyish features. Indeed, had she worn a forage cap she would have been a very fair representation of a military cadet. A contrast to her was afforded by a third member with a round, Madonna face, peach bloom cheeks, and demure eyes. Still a fourth reminded me of Hypatia, her classic features bearing a marble pallor. I became very good friends with all these ladies later on, but at first

blush they seemed denizens of a world with which I had never been acquainted.

But why prolong a description by which I cannot hope to do more than realise the faintest whiff of the atmosphere of that unique club? Suffice it to say that it was in this environment that many of the outstanding Labour events of the next few years germinated. The Democratic Club was really the "Behind the Scenes" of many developments that were played out on a much larger stage, while its Saturday night concerts commanded the best amateur and professional talent in London.

To my wife and I it became a veritable godsend. We quickly made many congenial friends. And the interests of the members were so varied, and their characters so contrasted, that it was possible to sit in the club room and study at our convenience a perfect microcosm of all that was being thought, said, and done in progressive circles.

I am sure we could never have lived through those hard times, when our home was up two flights of stairs in the tenement house in the narrow Wine Office Court, but for the change and relief afforded at the Democratic Club. The wife, I think, benefited even more by it than I did. My work, hunting up news, took me out a good deal at nights, and then she would slip over to Chancery Lane, and enjoy the versatile company to be found there, and when I had turned in my night's "stuff," there I would call for her, and we would return home quite reconciled to the strange environment in which we two young provincials found ourselves.

And I must say that the Club assisted me to get a footing in the casual journalism of Fleet Street. I obtained many tips from one or another that helped me to an exclusive piece of news.

Sometimes they came through my wife, who was much more sociable than I.

When I had brought off successfully one or two of these "scoops," I began to be known amongst the Fleet Street "liners." In those days the "liners" were mainly broken-down members of all the professions, with a sprinkling of ambitious young men who were striving to get their feet upon the ladder of a staff appointment.

Competition was keen. Any one who had an item of news was at liberty to send it in to any or all of the papers. Generally the first to arrive was accepted by the sub-editors. The rest of the messages dealing with the same event were pitched into the waste-paper basket. On the Saturday the lucky contributor called at the office for his pay at so much—generally a penny—per line.

Under ordinary circumstances it might have taken me a considerable time to secure a living-wage connection, but it so happened that shortly after my arrival in London there was a considerable boom in Labour and Socialist news, and of this I reaped the advantage.

That boom began with the West End riots in February 1886, as a result of which Burns, Williams, Champion, and Hyndman, were indicted for seditious conspiracy, and tried at the Old Bailey before Mr. Justice Cave. I made good money out of those disturbances, which set me on my feet with the Fleet Street sub-editors as a man with a good nose for exclusive Labour and Socialist news.

As I have just now mentioned for the first time Mr. Hyndman, the man who played the leading part in the drama of British Socialism for a period of nearly forty years, it is proper that I should do him the due honour of a formal introduction.

Not that he needs it in the sense that Champion

did. The story of British Socialism cannot be told without relating Hyndman's part in it, and when I come to deal with the events occurring between 1905 and 1920, he will bulk more largely than in this story.

In the 1880's Hyndman was in the foreground of everything. In the 1890's Keir Hardie and the Independent Labour Party somewhat obscured Hyndman and the Social Democrats. In the 1900's the United Labour Party reigned paramount. But Hyndman's name and reputation are dear and familiar to the men and women of this generation. It may be of interest, therefore, to learn how he impressed me, a contemporary, of the eighties.

I first heard Hyndman speak at West Nottingham, during the Burns' Election campaign. What struck me most about him was the contrast between his language and his looks. His appearance was intensely respectable. He never discarded the silk hat of conventionality. A luxuriant beard hung down to the top button of his inevitable frock-coat. About the corners of his eyes were the wee wrinkles that bespeak humour, but his ample forehead was free from furrows. Altogether, he had a benevolent aspect, and when one heard his flowing periods and fiery rhetoric, one came to the conclusion that—

"He was the mildest-mannered man
That ever scuttled ship or cut a throat."

Such, as he appeared to me, was Henry Mayers Hyndman, the founder of the Social Democratic Federation, and, so long as he lived, its leader. At the time of these events he was forty-five years of age. He came of a wealthy London family, had been educated at Cambridge, and had played cricket for his University. His books and pamphlets made many converts to Socialism, of whom, perhaps, the

most fruitful was Robert Blatchford, whose *Merrie England* sold close on two million of copies, and who, about this time, was serving his apprenticeship to journalism on the staff of *Bell's Life*. But Blatchford's story cannot be told here. Just now it is his Socialist mentor with whom I have to deal, and those with whom Hyndman was associated in the stirring events it is now my duty to describe.

CHAPTER VIII

FAIR TRADE IN THE EIGHTIES

DURING 1885 and 1886 there was a severe Unemployed Crisis, one of the many that were instrumental in opening the eyes of the citizens to the imperfections of the Individualistic State.

It was the continued existence of hundreds of thousands of people out of work that turned so many to thoughts of Socialism in those early days.

But for a time other movements arose side by side with that for Socialism. The Fair Trade agitation was one of those ebullitions of dissatisfaction with things as they were.

You may remember that the famous Joseph Chamberlain revived the Fair Trade idea in the early years of this century under the name of Tariff Reform. It was as a consequence of the agitation for Tariff Reform that the Socialist Parties in Great Britain became unified.

Tariff Reform and Socialism had always this in common—the conditions favourable to the growth of one were favourable to the growth of the other. The underlying idea of both was Protection, but with this vital difference. Tariff Reform postulated that the workers needed to be protected from enemies abroad ; Socialism taught that their enemies were in their midst.

What ultimately set Socialism on its feet as a Parliamentary force was the development of a supplementary idea, namely, that British workmen really did need protection from competitors abroad

—that class of competitors who were financed by British capital unpatriotically invested in foreign lands, the profits upon which, amounting to 150 millions sterling value per annum, brought into the country in the form of commodities—excess imports—robbed the British workman of the opportunity to supply the home market to the extent of the labour incorporated in the imported excess goods.

From the moment that this idea was accepted, and a penal tax proposed on the realised profits, the Socialists had an election cry that differentiated them from the Free Traders and the Tariff Reformers, and since then the progress of Parliamentary Socialism has been unchecked.

But I must get back to 1886. My apology for such dissertations is the impossibility of dealing retrospectively with now accomplished events, without occasionally lifting the veil a little higher than the exact chronological period which one is describing would strictly warrant.

The West End riots of 1886 arose out of a demonstration in Trafalgar Square organised by the Fair Traders. This demonstration was intended to draw the whole of the organised workmen of London into line with that movement. The Social Democrats, however, were fiercely antagonistic, and after capturing the bulk of the assembled crowd, invited their audience to parade through Clubland to Hyde Park. On the route the processionists were jeered at by the ill-advised members of certain clubs—and that started the riots.

I had, in my capacity of reporter of all Labour movements, been studying the Fair Traders for some time. They attracted my attention before migrating to London. In August of the preceding year, 1885, I had read in the papers of a deputation of Fair Traders to interview Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office. Their leaders were three men named

Lemon, Kelly, and Peters. Lemon was generally known as Captain Lemon, and he was president of what was called the British Seamen's Society. Kelly and Peters also held official positions in trades associated with the water-side industries.

The deputation to the Foreign Office was introduced by the Lord Mayor.

Mr. Kelly, on behalf of the London river-side workers, said employment had fallen off in the West India and other docks. What the intelligent and representative working man wanted was work and wages. They wanted to protect themselves from the constantly increasing inroads of foreign exported productions.

Mr. Peters claimed that public opinion was on their side. He said the British workman wanted a fair field and no favour. He hoped that Lord Salisbury would be the last British Statesman he would have to consult on this matter.

Lord Salisbury replied that it was no use to come to the Foreign Office. They must go to the public and change public opinion. The Foreign Office could do nothing in negotiation until it had power to make a bargain.

All through the General Election of 1885 the cry of the Fair Traders was heard. The Election ousted Lord Salisbury, who had succeeded to Mr. Gladstone in June, from office. But there was a feeling that Gladstone's Government would be but short-lived, and the Fair Traders, during January 1886, organised the Trafalgar Square demonstration, out of which the riots arose.

Those riots were entirely unpremeditated. The responsibility really lay on the shoulders of the police, and the Commissioner of Police was compelled to resign. Had there been any decent force of police on duty, the mob would never have got out of hand.

But there can be no question that Burns and the Social Democrats, while not conspiring to riot, did arrange for a counter-demonstration against the Fair Traders. Burns was always vociferously indignant against men whom he alleged to be parasites on the Labour movement. Against Lemon, Kelly, and Peters the vials of his wrath were voluminously outpoured.

"Look here," he said to me one night in the Democratic, "what do you think of this?"

"This" was a handbill calling the Fair Trade Demonstration in Trafalgar Square for the 8th of February.

"Oh," said I, "I've got a copy already. I don't think much about it. Another red herring."

"That is just what it is," said Burns. "But let Messrs. Lemon, Kelly, and Peters look out for squalls."

"Why?" said I. "What do you intend to do?"

"Steal the pitch before they arrive. We decided to do so at a meeting in Holborn last Sunday, and I have just come away from an Executive meeting at which all the arrangements were made. I'm to bell the cat and be chairman."

"All right," said I, "I'll be there, no fear."

Burns's hint inspired me to ferret out Kelly, who was the organiser of the demonstration, and without warning him of what the Social Democrats intended, I secured an advance copy of the resolution to be submitted.

I put it in here because it helps to explain the indignation Burns expressed, and that all the Social Democrats—myself included—felt; the plausible character of the resolution made it, so they believed, dangerous to the uneducated workmen.

It reads as follows:—

"That it is the duty of Her Majesty's Government and all Local Authorities throughout the country

to start useful public works for the employment of the great masses of workmen unemployed through no fault of their own.

"That, in order to maintain the farm labourer on the soil of the United Kingdom so as to check the ever-increasing influx of that class of useful labour into our great towns, where there is no demand for it, causing much misery and suffering, not only to the men themselves, but to the town labourer, and causing wages to fall to the lowest point, the time has now come when Parliament should earnestly settle itself to succour and relieve our distressed agricultural industry in the interests of our national labour.

"And that, bearing in mind the disastrous effects of foreign tariffs on British labour abroad, and upon home industries in our national markets by the operation of foreign trade bounties, this meeting declares that the time has arrived when a Minister of Commerce and Agriculture should be appointed by Her Majesty's Government so as to look after the interests of British Labour in our own and foreign markets, and secure fair play for home industries."

Looking at that resolution in the light of historical achievement, one can now see how, despite the bitter antagonism of the early Socialists, the Fair Traders had the root of the matter in them. They, like the latter Tariff Reformers, placed their fingers on a sore place in the body politic. Their fault was that they simply applied a salve to the sore instead of seeking to eradicate its deep-seated causes. But when one reflects how the Labour Party and the Socialists also, for more than a generation, continued to ignore foreign investments, the abuse which vitiated Free Trade—sound in itself—one is constrained to feel more charitably towards even the Fair Traders.

But there was no such charity amongst the contemporary Social Democrats. To them the Fair Traders were the hired tools of the landed interest, and they made their plans to utterly discredit them with their alleged intended dupes.

CHAPTER IX

BURNS'S SPEECHES IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE

THE outcome of the Trafalgar Square meeting on 8th February, 1885, was that Burns, Champion, Hyndman, and Williams were brought to trial at the Old Bailey on the 5th of April following, the indictment charging them with Seditious Conspiracy.

Burns made a speech in his own defence, from which I quote his version of what happened in the Square.

"I heard," he said, "that there was going to be a meeting of the starving unemployed of London in Trafalgar Square, and that this meeting was convened by four of the most infamous scoundrels that ever wore boot-leather in the streets of London — four men whose antecedents were bad, who were prepared to trade on the misery of the poor provided their pockets were filled, who on the night after the meeting were ejected from public-houses in Fleet Street for drunkenness and disorderly conduct.

"I reached the place at 1.30. I was recognised, as I am very well known to the workmen of London, by a large number of people who were then present. They called on me for a speech.

"I declined to speak, and told them that when the Fair Traders arrived, I would move an amendment, and that if they declined to have the amendment moved, I would hold a meeting of my

own. The crowd pushed me towards the lower part of the Square, and hoisted me on to the platform.

"I then entered into a consultation with the police. I told them that I had no desire to interfere with their authority, that I would use what influence I had over the crowd as a means of securing a peaceful meeting, and see that no property was damaged. Superintendent Dunlap, in the exercise of a wise discretion, allowed me to speak.

"Our meeting at the Nelson Column was satisfactorily conducted. Quietness and order prevailed. After speaking I called on several whom I recognised in the crowd, and resolutions were submitted to about 20,000 persons, for by this time the crowd had considerably augmented. No damage was done. There was no conflict with the police. We avoided that, as Superintendent Dunlap admits.

"When the Fair Traders came, I climbed up the balustrade, and acted as chairman of that second meeting. All know that the Fair Traders, Messrs. Peters, Kelly, Kenny, Lemon, and others are regarded as arrant impostors by the workmen of London, and I was desirous that there should not be a physical conflict between the unemployed and those honest but misguided men who are the dupes of these bogus representatives.

"The day of these mercenaries, I am pleased to say, is now over. The penalty for betraying the workers, I hope, will be heavy enough to deter any man from selling their cause, as it has many times been sold.

"My speech was substantially what the witnesses had said—that laws should be passed that the Government should provide work for skilled and unskilled labourers; that the principles of Socialism recognised to-day by the State in regard to sewage farms and waterworks, railways, post-offices and

telegraphs, should be further extended ; and that in so far as they were extended, it would conduce to the well-being of the community, of which the unemployed in Trafalgar Square are a more important part than the club loungers think they are. Is it revolution to demand that the workers should be allowed to live like men ? Was it sedition for a man to ask his brothers to combine ? If so, sedition of that kind was going to be very popular in the near future.

“The meeting passed off satisfactorily. I found that the crowd were becoming somewhat turbulent in consequence of the Fair Traders’ platforms being upset, and I thought it my duty to listen to the suggestion which was made to me from many quarters that we should proceed in procession through the West End to Hyde Park.”

That is Burns’s own version of what happened in Trafalgar Square, and it naturally slurs over the particular expressions for the use of which he was indicted.

But it is necessary to put them in evidence here, or the picture of what Burns really was at that time would be misleading and inaccurate.

Burns omitted to tell how, when he was “pushed towards the lower part of the Square” by the crowd, which, “hoisted him on to the platform,” he was waving a red flag, and was accompanied by Champion. Nor does he mention that he and Champion were ultimately removed from the plinth by the police, nor how he then carried the red flag across the Square, and was still waving it when he climbed the balustrade in front of the National Gallery, from which the second meeting was addressed.

But the facts are that he and Champion were there joined by Jack Williams and Hyndman, and that all four delivered speeches which, whatever

their message, were very different in tone to the constitutional address described by Burns.

Burns, in opening the meeting, declared that he and his friends of the Revolutionary Social Democratic League were not there to oppose the agitation for the unemployed, but they were there to prevent the people being made the tools of the paid agitators who were working in the interests of the Fair Trade League.

He went on to denounce the House of Commons as composed of capitalists who had fattened on the labour of the working men, and in this category he included landlords, railway directors, and employers, who, he said, were no more likely to legislate in the interests of the working men than were the wolves to labour for the lambs.

To hang these people, he said, would be to waste good rope, and as no good to the people was to be expected from these "representatives," there must be a revolution to alter the present state of things.

The people who were out of work, he continued, did not want relief, but justice. From whom should they get justice? From such as the Duke of Westminster and his class, or the capitalists in the House of Commons and their class.

No relief or justice would come from them.

The working men had now the vote conferred upon them. What for? To turn one party out and put the other in? Were they going to be content with that while their wives and children wanted food?

When the people of France demanded food, the rich laughed at those they called the "men in blouses," but the heads of those who laughed soon decorated the lamp-posts.

Here the leaders of the Revolutionary Democratic League wanted to settle affairs peaceably

if they could ; but if not, they would not shrink from revolution.

Champion was the first speaker to be called upon by Burns. He proposed a resolution to the effect that the Government should be called upon to start public works, and especially to build industrial dwellings.

Jack Williams seconded the resolution, and declaimed against what he termed the Fair Trade agitation ; the workers would get all they wanted if they would only efficiently organise themselves.

Hyndman was called on to support the resolution.

That, he said, was not the first time that the unemployed had met in Trafalgar Square. He remembered a similar demonstration twenty years ago, and one ten years ago.

How long, he asked, did they intend to allow that state of things to go on ? They had the matter in their own hands. They were asked to be moderate. How could they be moderate when they were out of work ?

“Look,” he cried, “at those clubs,” pointing towards Pall Mall. What did the members of those clubs care for their distress ?

Where were their Members of Parliament that day ? They were sitting comfortably in their clubs, not caring a straw whether the people starved or not.

Shame on the people for not resisting their oppressors ! If a few thousand persons had the pluck of a few individuals they would soon alter that state of things.

But what happened ?

Men in work were against men out of work. They should all stand together as working classes against the plundering classes, but, instead of combining, they fought with one another.

The Social Democrats were ready to lead ; would they follow ?

Do not, he concluded, ask for charity ; ask for the land and the machinery of England, which were theirs, and made valuable by their labour. They had no other hope except from revolution.

Burns then closed the meeting, and, in doing so, delivered another address—the third that afternoon.

The next time, he said, that the unemployed met it would be to go and sack the bakers' shops in the West End of London.

They had had too much talk. It was time the men of England—and there were one and a half millions out of work—did something else beside talk.

As a Revolutionist, he said, it was better to die fighting than starving.

The next time they met it would not be to speak, but to take the wealth of which they had been robbed.

When they did that, would those who would join them hold up their hands ?

In response to this appeal a large number of hands were raised.

Burns then pointed to the Fair Trade platforms, and said the men there were paid agitators, who lived on their poverty, but the Social Democrats were men who would bear the responsibility of their words and actions.

And then it was that Burns, still carrying the red flag, and waving it wildly, led off the excited crowd through Clubland in the direction of Hyde Park.

What happened on the way, and what was said in the Park, remains to be told.

CHAPTER X

THE RIOTS IN THE WEST END

FOLLOWING the course taken in describing the occurrences in Trafalgar Square, I will allow Burns himself to give his version of what happened on the way to Hyde Park.

"I would," he said, "call the Attorney-General's attention to this significant fact, supported by the whole of the evidence—and that is that no damage was done by the procession from the time we left Trafalgar Square until we reached the Carlton Club.

"And what was the initial cause of the damage being done?

"Probably you, gentlemen of the jury, have not been in so many demonstrations and processions as I have, but if you would consult the working classes who think on political subjects, and who have attended large mass meetings in Hyde Park, you would find, on investigation, that there is a class of men who make it a practice, on occasions of political demonstrations, to laugh and jeer, from their club windows, at the poverty of what they term "the great unwashed," to jeer at the misery their own greed has created, and yet these very men at election times crave the votes of those who had previously received their sneers.

"The crowd were not in a temper to stand even

mere jeering, and they were not disposed to respond to contemptuous jeers by a smile.

“And what was the result? Stone-throwing commenced. And that was the result of the stupid, ungentlemanly, criminal conduct of the Carlton Club members.

“I did my best to repress the stone-throwing, instead of inciting the crowd, believing, as I do, that window-breaking, except perhaps as a warning, is useless to effect a change in our system of society based as it is on the robbery of labour. I did everything, as the evidence proved—as you have heard said—that was in my power to conduct the procession as peacefully as possible to Hyde Park, where it was my intention to call on them to disperse.

“The stupidity of the members of the Carlton decided otherwise.

“The stone-throwing continued to Hyde Park, but not consecutively. It ceased between the Carlton and the Thatched House at the bottom of St. James’s Street, and very little damage was done between those places, as by this time I was able to exercise some influence in keeping the men quiet. That part of the route is a proof that we did exercise our influence and control in a proper direction.

“But at the Thatched House the contemptuous jeering was renewed. It was more vehement than at the Carlton; and from the Thatched House right up to St. James’s Street and down Piccadilly, riot—if you define ‘riot’ as the breaking of windows—was supreme. I was unable to check it. The fault was not mine.

“We reached Hyde Park.

“I got on the Achilles statue and called upon the workmen to discontinue the violent outrages which had taken place, as it was not by window-

breaking that an intelligent reorganisation of society could be brought about. The main body agreed with me.

"Some hot-headed ones shouted out, and asked that they might be led against the soldiers.

"I object to be saddled with speeches such as the 'bread and lead' phrase, and the 'powder and shot' interjections made by men in the crowd at Hyde Park. Mr. Champion and I directed our replies in response to those suggestions.

"And what was the result?

"The crowd at the Achilles statue quietly dispersed. And we have it on the authority of the police themselves that although some from the meeting did go into South Audley Street, and there was rioting there, it was not due to our speeches, because the damage and rioting took place contemporaneously with our speeches at the Achilles statue."

It will be admitted that Burns made out a good case, but, of course, he could not be everywhere and see everything, and now that we had his version, I will give mine.

When I state that eventually between £8000 and £9000 had to be paid by the authorities to compensate for the damage done, it will be evident that the riot was a most serious one.

But it would be manifestly unfair to say that the damage was done by the Social Democrats in the procession.

In addition to the Social Democrats there was a very large admixture of those disorderly and dishonest elements who always gather to take advantage of any excitement going on.

Burns, Champion, Hyndman, and Williams were in the van of the procession, and with them were many other less well-known Comrades, but the bulk of the crowd was composed of the unem-

ployed who had gathered to listen to the Fair Traders, and the disorderly contingent previously referred to.

As the crowd passed through Waterloo Place they picked up the stones lying loose between the United Service and the Athenæum Clubs.

They had their ammunition ready when they reached the Carlton, and, while it is true that the members of the Carlton jeered as described by Burns, it is possible that the stone-throwing would have commenced at the Carlton in any case.

Leaving the Carlton, where only one or two windows were broken, the crowd passed the Reform, the Beaconsfield, and the Marlborough without doing any damage.

The Service Club, however, at the bottom of St. James's Street, was hotly peppered, as was also the Thatched House.

Brooks's and the New University Club were severely bombarded, the great panes in the middle being completely smashed out of their frames.

White's and Boodles, aristocratic resorts, were passed over, but the Devonshire, where a large number of Liberal and Radical M.P.'s and Parliamentary candidates resorted, was bombarded for several minutes.

The double windows were broken and the stones penetrated, rattling through the reading room and smoking room.

Leaving Clubland, the crowd, which had by this time got quite out of hand, began to break the windows in the tradesmen's shops.

All the windows on the south side of Piccadilly, from the General Stock Exchange at the corner of St. James's Street to Green Park, were so badly smashed that most of the tradesmen had to put up their shutters.

Immediately the crowd came to the Park they

crossed over to the north side of Piccadilly, and commenced breaking windows until Apsley House was reached.

The windows of many private carriages in Piccadilly were also broken.

With regard to the speeches delivered at the Achilles statue, I have already given Burns's version of the gist of those made by himself and Champion.

Hyndman and Williams also spoke, and Hyndman's speech may be quoted as an illustration of the line taken by all the speakers.

Hyndman said that the leaders of the Social Democratic Party regretted what had occurred in St. James's Street and Piccadilly.

Those who threw the stones were probably the agents of the enemy, who wished to bring the Social Democrats into discredit.

But they felt certain that, sooner or later, if steps were not taken to remove the real causes of the distress, force would have to be resorted to.

The leaders of the Social Democrats, however, were not the men to call upon unarmed men to run risks in collision with the police and soldiers.

The meeting then broke up. A crowd of about 500, preceded and followed by small detachments of police, marched back to Trafalgar Square, and, as they passed, the shopkeepers closed their windows.

Meantime the Fair Traders, who claimed that they were the representatives of the organised trades, and said that seventy-four Unions had sent delegates to the committee meetings at which the demonstration had been arranged, had dispersed.

The speakers had alluded generally to the great distress which prevailed in consequence of the want of employment, and then the resolution, of

which I gave a copy in a preceding chapter, was put and declared unanimously carried.

And so ended the great day of the West End riots, important as being the first occasion on which the defenders of the existing order had been confronted by the apostles of the Social Revolution.

CHAPTER XI

I INTERVIEW HYNDMAN AND CHAMPION

THE steps taken by the authorities are an eloquent testimony to the alarm created by the riots in the minds of the middle and upper classes. But they had by no means a monopoly of alarm at the moment.

The leaders of the Social Democratic Federation were genuinely afraid of the Frankenstein that had been raised. It was no part of their plan that rioting should take place. What they desired was to discountenance the Fair Traders, and to repudiate their claims to the leadership of working-class opinion.

But they had so roused the indignation of the people that the jeering of the club habitués had been like applying a torch to a mass of gunpowder. And there was a very serious danger that the authorities would punish them—Messrs. Burns, Hyndman, Champion, and Williams—for what was really the fault of the men who assembled in the club windows, and insulted the men in the procession.

We have already seen the line Hyndman took in his Hyde Park speech. He was particularly anxious to rebut the idea that the Social Democratic Federation speakers had incited the mob to violence. And it occurred to me that, in my capacity of journalist, I might be able to help by presenting the Social Democratic Federation point of view to the public.

So when I called at the *Pall Mall Gazette* office to turn in my report of the riots for that same evening's latest edition, I suggested that I might be able to get an "interview" with Hyndman for next day's issue. I was immediately commissioned to do so.

"What the devil two men like Hyndman and Champion are doing in such a galley passes my comprehension," said the news editor. "Bring out their side of the case as well as you can, but don't forget," he added, "that your interrogatories will be regarded as representative of the *Pall Mall*, and don't commit the paper to any sympathy with their mad ideas."

Accordingly I sought out Hyndman, and was fortunate enough to find Champion with him.

If I quote freely from the interview, it is because of its value as a contemporary record. It enables us to realise, at this distance of time, the means whereby the Social Democrats originally expected the social revolution to come, and the form they anticipated it would assume better than any descriptive writing in which I might now indulge.

"We have had a great stroke of luck to-day," said Mr. Hyndman, rubbing his hands joyfully, "a great stroke of luck, indeed, and so unexpected."

"Yes," said Mr. Champion, "none of us had any idea this would happen."

"What!" said I, "do you mean to say that you did not instigate the mob to break all the windows? I am assured," I went on, "that Mr. Hyndman, Mr. Burns, and Mr. Champion were seen leading on the mob to break all the windows in the clubs, even if they did not throw the stones."

I put the matter bluntly in this way to enable the Social Democrats to come out with a general denial, and Mr. Hyndman quickly took advantage of the opening.

"Nothing of the kind," said Mr. Hyndman. "So

far from having instigated the attack on the clubs, we did not even bring the people together to Trafalgar Square. That was the work of the paid agitators, Fair Traders, and the like, who collected the unemployed in order to gain a rise for their own particular nostrums. As they had got the people together, we thought it a pity to allow so good an opportunity to pass unutilised, so, having the congregation provided for us, we inculcated the Social Democratic doctrines, with the result that, as you saw, we had the whole meeting, and they had nothing but the fringes."

"Then," said I, "the whole responsibility for the outrages this afternoon lies upon Messrs. Kelly, Peters, and others, who brought the crowd together?"

"Precisely!" said Mr. Hyndman. "All we did was simply to preach the true faith."

"Then you did not break the windows, loot the shops, &c.?"

"So far from that being the case," said Mr. Champion, "if I had had a revolver, and seen the mob looting the shops, I would have shot them down right and left with my own hand. So far as I know, only two shops were looted in Piccadilly—Dacres, the shirt shop, where several white shirts were taken, which some of the crowd tried to put on in Hyde Park, with curious effects. The other was Raffini's Tonic Wine shop."

"Yes," said Mr. Hyndman. "I was very much afraid the crowd had got hold of brandy, when I saw them knocking off the heads of bottles, pouring out the wine, and drinking right out of their hands. There were tiers of hands, one below the other, catching the wine as it was poured out, and dripped from one hand to the other. But, with that exception, I did not see any plundering. Every carriage was surrounded on the road to

Hyde Park, and I much regret that a lady was frightened who was driving in a barouche. That was entirely contrary to our wishes. None of the responsibility lies at our door. We simply did what we have been doing for the last two years and more, namely, set before the people what we consider to be the only truth that could bring them permanent and substantial relief. But we had no idea that they would proceed at once to break windows or indulge in any violence whatsoever. The time for that is not yet come, in our opinion. It must come, but this was premature, decidedly premature." "By the way," continued Mr. Hyndman, "the club that was worse smashed than any other happened to be the New University, which, by a very curious, but accidental circumstance, was the club from which I was expelled some time ago for my Socialist tendencies. Not that that had anything to do with it," he added, "because the people knew nothing whatever about differences between the clubs."

"What do you think will come out of it all?" I asked.

"Probably relief works," said Mr. Hyndman, "that is if Mr. Chamberlain is the man he professes to be. When Mr. Chamberlain was waited upon by the people at Highbury, he feared to face them, taking refuge in some back premises until the people left the grounds, and possibly he may refuse to meet a deputation from the people of London in the same way. Should he do so, we shall wait upon him where'er he takes his walks abroad, in parks or public streets, and confront him with the starving thousands of his fellow-countrymen."

"We shall ask Mr. Chamberlain three things," said Mr. Champion. "First, whether he is personally in favour of relief works being undertaken; Second, whether he will advise the Government to

start such relief works ; and Thirdly, if so, can he assure us that the Government will take his demands into serious consideration. If he says 'Yes,' well and good, something will have been done to relieve the distress of the working classes ; if not——"

"If not, what will you do ?" I asked.

"No one knows what we shall do," said Mr. Hyndman impressively, "not even ourselves. Probably we shall disappear for some months, and then you shall hear of us in a more serious fashion than you have heard to-day. One thing is certain," added Mr. Hyndman, "we dare not go back if we would."

"Why dare you not go back ?" I said.

"Because," replied Mr. Hyndman, "I should be killed if I did."

"Stuff and nonsense," said I. "Who would kill you if you went back ?"

"I know," said Mr. Champion, "two men who each might be guaranteed to kill Hyndman if he sells the cause. We must go forward, whether we like it or not. There is no retreat. We do not care for our lives, and when you find a band of resolute men who are willing to die in defence of their cause, you may depend upon it this trouble will not soon be overpast. Things are bad ; they are getting worse, and every man who is out of work, with wife and children hungry at home, is ripe for our teaching.

"Yes," continued Mr. Champion, "you should see how their eyes glisten when we tell them the truth about Society. When we tell a man who has not had any food all day and is starving and shivering with cold, that his suffering is due to the way in which he has been plundered by the Capitalists ; when we tell him that he has probably produced £10,000 value, and he has only received £1500 in

wages, and that the balance of £8500 is still due from Society, he greedily drinks in the new gospel."

"And it is true," exclaimed Mr. Hyndman, "and you cannot get over it. There is a great deal more of that idea abroad than most people think, and when once the idea is planted in the minds of the working man that nothing can put him right except an entire revolution of the existing order of Society, they will not be easy to stop before they have made a clean sweep of the classes who have fattened so long upon the plunder of the people."

When the report of this interview was printed in the *Pall Mall*, I don't think it had much effect in reassuring the authorities. Whatever they may have thought of the plea of non-responsibility for the riots, the feeling grew that it was necessary to make an attempt to muzzle men like these.

CHAPTER XII

THE DEPUTATION TO MR. CHAMBERLAIN

THE chief alarm that was felt about the West End riots at the time they happened was that they were associated with Hyndman and Champion, two men belonging to the military and middle classes. The ladies and gentlemen of Society felt that the foundations of the social system were being shaken when men whom they regarded as renegades from their caste were seen at the head of a mob that committed such serious damage to property.

It did not to them seem an anomaly that Burns, who belonged to the artisan class, should take part in such outrages. The anomaly in the case of Burns arose at a later period of his development, when he became a member of a Liberal Government, and an out-and-out defender of the system he attacked so vigorously in his Trafalgar Square days. And it is this development of Burns that I am attempting to trace in this story. It supplies a psychological interest, and that interest also characterises the careers of Hyndman and Champion.

It is very curious, at this distance of time, to look back on the forces that have fought on the side of progress, and those that rallied to the support of the good old *status quo*. Many once working-class leaders were either bought or converted into determined opponents of their earlier teaching. Conversely, many names could be cited of men and women, who, cradled in all the prejudices of

caste, ultimately shook themselves free and fought for the Democracy.

As it is the school of thought with which Hyndman and Champion were associated that is now winning all along the line, it is the reputation of those men, and others of the early pioneers which, obscured for a time, is now most brightly shining. Burns's more meteoric course completely eclipsed theirs for years, but they have now come into their kingdom, and all men do them honour.

So, while this story bears the name of John Burns, and its immediate object is to trace his rise and progress to the dazzling height of a Cabinet post, I must devote some space to a study of the career and actions of Henry Hyde Champion.

I submit that the character of a man who was the first to finance John Burns when he contested Nottingham in 1885, who rendered a similar service to Keir Hardie when he first contested Mid-Lanark in 1888, and who became one of the first missionaries of Socialism in Australia, is worthy of our study, and that what Champion did in Great Britain during the decade 1884-94 cannot be ignored in any faithful account of those troubled years.

Personally, I feel that there is a duty incumbent upon me in this connection, because I came to be in the nineties a determined opponent of Champion's methods. Just now, however, I am only concerned to indicate the one defect in Champion that was responsible for his rupture with British Socialism.

Champion could not eradicate from the fibre of his being the fruit of the early influences under which he was educated.

He brought with him into the Socialist movement the ideas imbibed during his career in the army, and in the environment surrounding him during his training for that vocation.

Note, in this connection, those passages in the *Pall Mall* interview in which Champion's declarations are recorded, and especially his avowal that he would have shot the looters down right and left had he seen them plundering. That is the attitude of the ex-artillery officer; no man who had been brought up amongst the poor would have made such an avowal.

It was this dragooning spirit that ultimately provoked the British Socialists into opposition to Champion, and that, coupled with a breakdown in health, brought about his exile to Australia.

I think it well to put on the record at this point the one trait that made it ultimately impossible for British Socialists to work with him in these islands, and now I may go on to detail the incidents that closely followed on the riots.

On Tuesday, the day after the riots, I accompanied the four Social Democratic leaders to Whitehall, where they went to seek an interview with Mr. Chamberlain, then the President of the Local Government Board, the office subsequently, after an interval of nineteen years, bestowed upon John Burns.

Mr. Chamberlain declined to see the deputation personally, but intimated that he was willing to receive any communication in writing.

Thereupon Mr. Hyndman wrote out the "Nature of their Business" on an interview memorandum.

The memorandum stated that they had called upon Mr. Chamberlain in order to be able to inform the public meeting of Unemployed, which they would address in the course of a few days, what Mr. Chamberlain, as President of the Local Government Board, intended to do in view of the hundreds and thousands of starving men in London and other parts of the country.

With the memorandum was sent up a copy of

the resolutions passed at the meeting in Trafalgar Square, to which was added a statement that pressure on the local authorities had entirely failed of effect, and that their letters to the Local Government Board had remained unanswered.

Mr. Chamberlain's answer, which was shortly afterwards given in writing, was as follows:—

“Mr. Chamberlain has received the copy of the resolutions passed at a meeting in Trafalgar Square. He does not think that the remedies proposed by the Social Democratic Federation would be effectual, and he is unable, therefore, to promise any support to them. At the same time he is making independent inquiries into the extent and character of the distress, and all applications from Local Authorities in correspondence with the Local Government Board will receive immediate attention. In every case where the circumstances require it, and where they do not already possess powers, the Boards of Guardians will be at once authorised to give outdoor relief when arrangements are made for a labour test sufficient to prevent imposture.”

Before Mr. Chamberlain's answer was received, Burns and Williams had left. Hyndman and Champion, however, drafted a reply, in which they stated that they were by no means satisfied.

As for the independent inquiry, that, they pointed out, would only mean more delay, and delay was not what starving people would care for.

The promise of outdoor relief, they said, was marred by several things, and chiefly by the labour test. What the men wanted was honest, useful work, and not a system of doles, accompanied by a servile, degrading test.

Moreover, the ratepayer was poor, especially in Holborn and Clerkenwell, where so much distress existed, and the Guardians would soon find their resources unequal to the demands for outdoor relief.

This was on the Tuesday. On the Wednesday there was a development of the situation in the shape of a demand from the Fair Traders that Hyndman, Burns, Champion, and Williams should be arrested.

This demand was voiced at a meeting of the Organising Committee of the Fair Trade Demonstration. The Chairman of the Committee roundly charged the Social Democrats with having incited the scum of the Metropolis to pillage and plunder the shops of the West End tradesmen.

The mob, he said, who did that disgraceful work were not working men. He was surprised the authorities had not yet arrested Messrs. Burns, Hyndman, Champion, and Williams, but they had better do their duty, or else the unemployed working men of London would take the matter in their own hands.

Simultaneously there arose a general outcry in the Press for the arrest and prosecution of the Social Democratic leaders, modified in some quarters by the fear that that would be a welcome advertisement for the Socialists.

The News Editor of the *Pall Mall* held that view, and he sent me to obtain another interview with Mr. Hyndman, in which I was to get his opinion on that point.

CHAPTER XIII

HYNDMAN IN DIPLOMATIC AND BURNS IN DEFIANT MOOD

WHEN I saw Mr. Hyndman he was quite willing to talk, though rather indignant at the idea that the Social Democrats would welcome a prosecution for the advertisement it would give to their plans.

"That is not true," he said energetically. "We do not wish in the least to pose as martyrs, and we don't hanker after the advertisement. The present is no time to prosecute us. The opportunity of Monday was not of our seeking, but we took advantage of it exactly as we shall take advantage of the opportunity offered by a prosecution."

"But," I said, following out my instructions, "is not the Socialist movement a one-man movement, and if you are arrested, convicted, and laid by the heels for a year, would it not collapse?"

"Too late," replied Mr. Hyndman, with a smile. "On the contrary, it would spread and gain vigour just as a shrub does when you lop off one of its top shoots. There is only one way to kill the Socialist movement, pull it up by the roots. Remove the cause of it, the state of things in the social body that nourishes it, and it will die; not otherwise. I dare say my absence would be felt, but the general vigour that would be infused into the whole body would much more than compensate for it."

The demand for prosecution resulted in the issue of summonses on the Saturday, 13th February, made returnable on the 17th, and on that day the police inquiry began before Sir James Ingram, at Bow Street. At the close of the day the hearing was adjourned for a week, bail being allowed the defendants.

William Morris stood bail for Burns and Champion, Mr. Joseph Cowen, M.P., for Hyndman, and Belfort Bax for Williams. At the adjourned hearing the defendants were committed for trial at the Old Bailey.

On Sunday, 21st February, while he was on bail from the Police Court, Burns addressed a meeting in Hyde Park. The speech he then delivered indicates his defiant mood at that time.

Speaking in support of a resolution, "recognising fully that no permanent good will result for the working class until the workers themselves are organised sufficiently to overthrow the present system of economical and social oppression by taking into their own hands the land, machinery, and capital, and all means of production, to be used for the benefit of the entire labouring community," Burns said "That as he was beneath the protection of the law, he must of necessity be extremely moderate. He wanted that demonstration that day to be peaceable and orderly. He wanted them, when the meeting was over, to go quietly home. Let them not loot shops, let them not thieve anything, let them not take their ransom prematurely.

"They had been told by the Capitalist Press that they were 'the tag-rag and bob-tail.' The 'tag-rag and bob-tail' were there, not in the streets, but on the other side of the club windows. That was the odium that had ever been cast upon them by the men who lived on the proceeds of their labour. When moral worth was the standard by which

society would be recognised, who would be the 'tag-rag and bob-tail' then?

"It was stated that they (the Socialists) would have meted out to them the sternest justice. They were told there was equality before the law. What was the law that day? His advice to those men who thought that demonstration was a means by which they could improve their material position was that if they wanted to get on in life they should not work honestly, because society to-day remunerated her labourers in an inverse ratio to the wealth they produced. Why, if they thieved to-day they would get locked-up. Six months for stealing a turnip or a potato, when famine forced them to commit a theft; but let them steal a thousand acres, and they would get a peerage.

"He was indicted for sedition. What was sedition? It was a very vague, elastic charge; but if he was inciting to sedition in advocating a social revolution, then he said sedition would have to be his charge until the grave claimed him.

"Lord Randolph Churchill said the people of London were never in earnest until park railings came down and windows were broken. They were told by Mr. Chamberlain that the day was come when property should be ransomed to those from whom the property had been stolen. He did not want—the proletariat of London did not want—to take their ransom at an inappropriate time. What they wanted now was to impress upon the people the fact that in society to-day the seeds of a bloody revolution were germinating.

"He wanted to call their attention to the ebullition of popular indignation of last Monday week—that was what he called it. The society papers called it a bloodthirsty riot—he did not. They had been told that it had stemmed the tide of charity. He wanted the tide of charity dammed altogether.

If last Monday week's demonstration stemmed the tide of charity, that and other demonstrations would open up the floodgates of justice, and inequality must cease. They did not want charity ; they wanted work, justice, and no non-producers. He was inclined to think they would get it if they were determined.

"They had been told that they did not respect the fundamental law of the English Constitution. He said necessity knew no law. Poverty was not appeased by windy resolutions.

"Why did hungry men commit violence ? Was it because they were inherently vicious ? No, but because they saw before them idlers enjoying the wealth they had produced.

"Why was it that every now and then those revolts took place ? Because their middle classes were unable to manage the present position. He spoke prophetically a fortnight ago in Trafalgar Square ; he was going to do so then. If the Government did not comply with their demands, worse than what they had seen throughout the world must of necessity happen.

"What was their Houses of Parliament for ? Was it for bolstering up the privileges of the rich or for benefiting the whole of the people of Great Britain ? He wanted the nation to be benefited, and not a clique. He wanted the producers of wealth to have the full value of what they created.

"That was revolution. Revolution implied a complete change, whether peaceful or forcible, and he asked every one to support the resolution, and in doing so give three hearty cheers for the Social Revolution."

Three cheers were then given, Burns waving a red flag as fugleman.

Burns concluded by urging his audience not to forget that every attempt would be made to bring a

conviction against them. Let them not forget that some of them might see the inside of a prison cell.

"Supposing that were so, prosecutions gave a fillip to all movements. Prosecutions made martyrs, martyrs made converts, and all that meant that the cause of the people was won.

"What cared they for prosecutions? Death, the prison, had no terrors for them, because through Capitalism life had lost all its charms.

"What cared they for the authorities who get their power purely from the right of private ownership, by which they might not live?

"They had put their hands to the plough; they did not intend to go back until the people's cause was won, and a life worth living was handed on to future generations."

This tone was maintained at the Old Bailey trial—which lasted six days, from the 5th to the 10th April inclusive—by all the defendants, as excerpts from their speeches would show. What was said by Hyndman and Burns will suffice.

Hyndman, who defended himself, said "had it been necessary he could have called hosts of witnesses as to character, and to prove that he was not likely to aid in looting shops. It was unnecessary to do so, because the great social work in which he was engaged would have been greatly injured by such action.

"As to their position in the dock, he, with his co-defendants, really felt it an honour, for they appeared as representatives of a great social and national movement.

"The real root of the prosecution was that the Government was instigated by the Grand Viziers on the Continent, who thought that too great freedom was allowed to the people of England, and that it might prove dangerous to Continental nations.

"He had found the condition of the people in

this and other countries was worse than that of slavery and savagery, thus proving that there was a deep social question that had to be solved, and it was to help to solve that problem that he and the other defendants had spent their money and leisure."

But it was Burns who struck the highest note in his speech to the jury, as I will show in my next chapter.

CHAPTER XIV

BURNS'S SPEECH AT THE OLD BAILEY

I have already given quotations from Burns's speech dealing with matters of fact. What follows is a verbatim report of the passages dealing with the indictment for sedition. He defended himself, but was advised on points of law by Mr. W. M. Thompson, barrister, afterwards editor of *Reynolds's*.

Burns said:—"My Lords and Gentlemen of the Jury:

"As an unemployed worker, and a Social Democrat, I am placed in a somewhat peculiar position in this case. I expected when I was of the age of sixteen or seventeen that, at some time of my life, I should be brought face to face with the authorities for vindicating the class to which I belong.

"Since I was sixteen years of age I have done everything in my power to benefit the workers in a straightforward way. I have deprived myself, as many of my class have done, of hundreds of meals on purpose to buy books and papers to see if we could not by peaceful consultation, by deliberate and calm organisation, do what I am inclined to think the middle and upper classes by their neglect, apathy, and indifference, will compel artisans to do otherwise than peacefully.

"I plead 'Not Guilty,' my Lord, to the charge of sedition, particularly to the charge of seditious conspiracy. I plead not guilty, not to deny the

words I used on 8th February, or any other words I ever used, but simply because the language I used on that occasion had no guilt or sedition in it. I expressed the virtuous indignation against the misery and injustice of a man who had from his earliest infancy up to the present moment struggled and worked hard to support his wife and an aged mother, both of whom would instantly repudiate me if I were to go back from one single statement that I made on 8th February. I pointed out the steps that were necessary for a peaceful solution of the difficulties which the industrial classes have to encounter, and which press so hardly on the lower classes of society—as they are falsely called. I pointed out how the unequal incidence of taxation pressed upon shopkeepers and others, and how the capitalists and the rich were able to tide over the difficulties.

“Against this system of society I frankly confess I am a rebel, because society has outlawed me. I have protested against this state of society by which at present one and a half millions of our fellow-countrymen, adult males, are starving—starving because they have not work to do.

“I had very strong feelings upon this matter of the unemployed, particularly on the day in question, when we were brought face to face with men who for month after month had trod the street in search of work, with men whom I knew were honest ; whose only crime was that they let the idler enjoy that which the producer alone should have—not loafers and thieves—but the real unemployed of our nation city. Talk about strong language ! I contend my language was mild when you consider the usage they have received, and that the patience, under severe provocation, displayed by the workers, is almost slavish and cowardly.

“Now what have we done ? We have pursued

the same course for the last five years. These are remarkable defendants who stand in this box.

“There must be some unusual agitation to prompt one of the idle classes like Mr. Champion, a skilled artisan like myself, an unskilled labourer like Mr. Williams, and a middle-class man like Mr. Hyndman, to stand in this box for one simple cause. There must be something unusual to bring us here.

“We have gained nothing by this agitation ; on the contrary, we have lost what material well-being we had, and we come before you not as paid agitators pecuniarily interested in creating riots, tumults, and disturbances, but men anxious to change the existing system of society to one in which men should receive the full value of their labour, in which society will be regarded as something more than a few titled nonproducers who take the whole of the wealth which the useful workers alone produce.

“We are indicted for seditious conspiracy. If it were not so serious a charge in itself, it would be enough to raise a smile. Seditious conspiracy ! Why, if there is one thing that the Whigs, Radicals, and the Tory Party accuse us of it is this—that we have brought these questions—and we are the first who have done it—into the open street ! When we are again accused of conspiracy it will be when all open methods of securing redress have been tried and have failed.

“If you want to remove the cause of seditious speeches you must prevent us from having to hear, as we hear to-day, of hungry, poverty-stricken men who from no fault of their own are compelled to be out of work, who are fit subjects for revolutionary appeals. If you want to remove a seditious agitation, as it is called, you must remove, not the effect, but the cause of such agitation.

“We are not responsible for the riots ; it is

society that is responsible, and instead of the Attorney-General drawing up indictments against us, he should be drawing up indictments against society, which is responsible for neglecting the means at its command.

"I have not one single word of regret to utter for the part I have taken in this agitation. If my language was strong, the occasion demanded strong language. I say we cannot have in England, as we have to-day, five millions living on the verge of pauperism without gross discontent. Well-fed men never revolt. Poverty-stricken men have all to gain, and nothing to lose, by riot and revolution.

"There is a time, I take it—and such is the present, a time of exceptional depression—when it is necessary for men, particularly for the working classes, to speak out in strong language as to the demands of their fellows; and I contend it would be immoral, cowardly, and criminal to the last degree if I, having what little power I possess to interpret the wishes of my fellow-workers, were not to use every public occasion for ventilating the grievances of those who, from no fault of their own, are unable to ventilate them themselves.

"That meeting of 8th February called the attention of the people of Great Britain to this fact—that below the upper and middle strata of society there were millions of people living hard, degraded lives—men who were forced to live as they do, but who would, if possible, work and live virtuous lives—men who through the unequal distribution of wealth are consigned to the criminal classes, and women into the enormous army of prostitutes, whom we see in the streets of our large cities.

"And, as an artisan, I cannot see poor, puny, little babes sucking empty breasts, and honest men walking the streets for four months at a time—I cannot hear of women of the working classes being

compelled to prostitution to earn a livelihood—I cannot see these things without being moved not only to strong language, but to strong action, if necessary.

“Society journals demand our imprisonment. Why? Because £11,000 worth of windows have been broken. But how about the sacred human lives that have been, and are, degraded and blighted by the present system of capitalism?

“I am prepared to stand by what I said on that day. If I go to prison (as I think very doubtful) I shall serve my cause, as Mr. Champion has said, as well inside the prison as out.

“The word prison has no particular terrors for me. Through the present system of society life has lost all its charm, and a hungry man said truly (as Isaiah said in the Holy Book) that there was a time in the history of our lives when it was better to die in prison, or better to die fighting than to die starving.

“As the holy man said of old, so millions of men are thinking at the present moment; and if the governing classes want to bring on a revolution by force, such as has been mentioned by the counsel for the prosecution, they will find it come more speedily, and with more violence, if they deny to the poor men of England (who are too poor to pay for halls) the right to express their grievances and opinions in public meetings in the open air, and I would ask the jury, as they are for the moment the guardians of the right of free speech, as they have an opportunity in the present instance of laying down a good or bad precedent, I ask them in the interests of justice, particularly in the interests of the great mass of poverty-stricken men and women in this country, not to allow this opportunity to pass without stigmatising by their verdict as absurd, stupid, and frivolous, the prosecution that

has been brought against us by Her Majesty's Government."

On the jury returning to the Court, the foreman said they acquitted Messrs. Hyndman and Williams, and with regard to the other two defendants, he was desired to say the jury are of opinion that the language of Messrs. Burns and Champion was highly inflammatory, and greatly to be condemned ; but on the whole of the facts laid before them, they acquitted those two defendants of seditious intent.

The Judge : "That, gentlemen, is a verdict of 'Not Guilty.'"

And thus ended, to his great credit and glory, the first State trial of John Burns. One year and eight months later, on 16th January 1888, Burns again figured in the dock at the Old Bailey, in company with R. B. Cunningham Graham, M.P. In the interval, two Trades Congresses, those of 1886 and 1887, at which the Labour Electoral Association was projected and established, had been held. At the latter of these Congresses, Keir Hardie made his debut as a Labour Leader, and by the time Graham and Burns stood in the dock at the Old Bailey, Hardie, Graham, and Champion, had become associated in a Scottish triumvirate which resulted in the establishment of the Scottish Labour Party in 1889.

This is a chain of events which had great influence in determining Burns's ultimate development, but before we deal with it in detail, it will be better to describe "Bloody Sunday, 1887," and the part Burns played thereon. Meantime we will take a glimpse of Burns in his domestic environment, and hear what he had to say about his hopes and ambitions.

CHAPTER XV

MR. AND MRS. BURNS AT HOME, 1886.

THE Old Bailey trial gave bold advertisement to the name of John Burns. The leading part he had taken in the Trafalgar Square meeting, his speeches in Hyde Park, his red flag wagging on every conceivable occasion, culminating in his speech from the dock, made Burns the hero of the occasion. Henceforth the general public regarded him as of more account than his co-defendants.

That Burns enjoyed his notoriety I had many opportunities for seeing. We were very intimate in those early days. He frequently called in at our rooms in Wine Office Court, which were convenient when he came to town, and the wife and I had a standing invitation to return the visit any time we liked, and to get a cup of tea with him and Mrs. Burns at their house on Lavender Hill.

While the trial was impending, we had not found it convenient to make our call. But soon after the trial I had a slack afternoon, and the wife and I set out to discover Battersea.

It was on a Saturday that we paid our visit to Lavender Hill. The 'bus driver, on whose right and left we sat—it was in this way that we discovered a great deal of London—knew all about Burns, where he lived and worked, and he set us down at the door of his house, a four-storied, bay-windowed dwelling standing in a row a few yards off the road.

"That's his place, M'm," he said to the wife. "He



MRS. JOSEPH BURGESS

has the lower half of that house. Knock at the basement door. But it's half a chance he's in the Park, playing cricket."

We followed our directions, knocked at the basement door, and it was opened to us by Mrs. Burns, to whom we had been introduced when she made a flying visit to Nottingham during the 1885 election.

"You should have sent us word you were coming," she exclaimed. "Jack is in the Park, but I'll send for him. If I send now I may catch him before he joins a side for the afternoon's cricket."

"If you don't mind," I said, "I will go down to the Park."

"If you would," said Mrs. Burns, "that will save me going out to get a messenger."

So I walked to Battersea Park, and there I found Burns enjoying a practice at the nets.

He was frankly disappointed at having to miss his cricket.

"I wish you had come to-morrow," he said, "for I did want a game to-day. Besides, you could have heard me speak. But come along."

So he gave up his bat, and another took his place.

"Sorry I can't stop with you this afternoon, boys," Burns said to the players, "but you see how it is. John Burns has become a person of importance since he made the acquaintance of one of Her Majesty's Judges."

Amid cries of "Good old Burns," we left the cricket field and returned to Lavender Hill. On the way, Burns nodded to this person, shook hands with that, stopped for a chat with a third, and responded to every sign of recognition vouchsafed.

"Why, Jack," I said, "you might be in the midst of a Parliamentary candidature!"

"So I am, my boy; so I am," he replied. "In six

years from now I shall be the member for Battersea. I have already given Morgan—the present Liberal member—notice. He's a good soul, one of the best of his sort, runs his works on the eight hours' system, but John Burns wants Battersea, and John Burns means to have it. Six years will do it, in fact five would be sufficient. But the Parliament may last six, seeing that the Tories are in. Meantime, they are talking of establishing a County Council for London. If they do, John Burns will be one of the first members of that body to represent Battersea."

"Well," I said, "I must say I admire your confidence."

"Confidence begets confidence," he replied. "When a man knows what he wants, he is in a fair way for getting it. Now I do know what I want. I want to be the Tribune of Battersea, to represent it on the governing body of London, to sit for it in the House of Commons, and after that—"

"Well, what after that?"

"After that there is no limit to what may be accomplished by an able and ambitious man, and I am both. The position would give me such an advantage that I would become the undisputed leader of the Socialist and Labour forces of Great Britain."

"What about Champion? What about Hyndman?"

"They'll neither of them ever enter Parliament. They cannot get in as Labour members, and as Socialists they will be too heavily handicapped. No, I shall have the Parliamentary field all to myself—the Liberal-Labour men will not count. But here we are."

By this time we had reached Burns's house. After greeting my wife, he took me into his library. This was in the front basement, which was lit by a bay

window, and even then contained a goodly store of books.

"What do you think of that?" he cried. "Is it not a credit to a working man?"

Indeed it was, and I had no hesitation in telling him so.

"But it is only the merest skeleton of what it will be made if I have luck. Do you know what is almost the dearest wish of my heart?"

"To have a good library," I suggested.

"No," he said, "not so much to have a good library, with the accent on the have, as to make a complete collection of all books, pamphlets, newspapers, and so on, dealing with the Labour and Socialist movement—I've got a complete file of your *Operative*, as you can see—and when I die, to leave a 'John Burns' Collection' to the Battersea Free Library. I want the generations that come after me to be able to trace, step by step, the path I had to tread to win the position it is certain I shall some day assume. Don't you think it is a good idea?"

I knew Burns sufficiently well already, not to hesitate to endorse his views. To doubt them would have made him into a cool friend, to criticise them might have converted him into an active enemy.

When I had sufficiently admired his library, we adjourned to the living room, where Mrs. Burns and my wife were chatting, what time the kettle sang merrily on the hob.

After tea, we returned home. On reaching Wine Office Court I questioned my wife as to the impressions made upon her by Mrs. Burns.

"She's very pretty," she said, "but, of course, you would see that. What is more important, she is exceedingly ambitious. She dotes on Burns, and believes he is capable of doing great things. Moreover, she is determined he shall do them. And she will make him do them, mind that!"

"What do you mean ?"

"I mean that I don't think Mrs. Burns cares very much for what you call the movement. To her, the beginning and end of the movement is centred and wrapped up in her husband. And if ever it becomes a question of the movement going one way, and Burns's interests pointing another, she will urge Burns to follow his own star, and let the movement 'gang its ain gait.' It only needs one thing to give her a power against which Burns, were he ever so minded, would struggle in vain."

"And what is that ?"

"Let her bear a son. You heard Burns say he was a Malthusian. I don't think Mrs. Burns likes that boast. She is deeply in love with her husband, and he is equally in love with her. They have been married four years. When Burns gets into Parliament, and it is inevitable he will, she will want him to train on towards the Treasury Bench. But not in a subordinate post. She thinks the Cabinet is not too good for Burns. Well, what is going to happen if that ambition shows itself ? Surely, Burns will have to break with the Social Democratic Federation. I gathered from Mrs. Burns that he is already impatient of Hyndman's dominance there. Quarrels are certain to come about, and Burns will be driven off at a tangent. And whenever the impulse comes, you may depend upon it that Mrs. Burns will use her powers of persuasion in the same direction. And if she bears Burns a son she will get such a leverage that her will must prevail over any feelings of loyalty to his old comrades Burns may entertain."

I was very much struck, and made note of it at the time, with my wife's forecast of the influence Mrs. Burns would probably exert on his career, for when I told her what Burns had said to me, and we put two and two together, what she pre-

dicted did not seem at all an unlikely thing to happen.

And as at this point my wife disappears from the main current of my story, child-bearing and the rearing of our family keeping her henceforth more and more in the domestic circle, let me, before we part with her, pay a due tribute to the companion of my young manhood and middle age, who has, alas ! these more than twenty years been absent from my home and hearth, though never, thank God, from my memory.

When the final apportionment of the forces which created the Labour movement is made, the devoted women who encouraged and comforted those whose lot cast them into the forefront of the struggle, will enjoy their meed of praise.

When the hour was darkest and most disappointing, it was from them that courage was renewed. All honour to the martyred wives and mothers, but for whom Labour's champions might have been driven from the field. And all honour and affectionate regard to thee, my dearest comrade, who never knew the exultation of triumph, but bore a smiling face through successive defeats and disappointments.

This testimony to thy devotion and sacrifice I lay upon thy tomb—thou who wert ever true and tender to me.

After which digression I must again take up the thread of my story.

CHAPTER XVI

WHY CHAMPION LEFT THE S.D.F., LORD MAYOR'S DAY, 1886

THE Trades Congress official year runs from September to September. In the twelve months ending September 1886, there had been two General Elections.

We have already dealt with that of November 1885, in so far as it concerned John Burns's candidature at West Nottingham. Other Labour candidates had been more fortunate than Burns. W. Abraham ("Mabon"), John Wilson (Durham), George Howell, Joseph Leicester, and Joseph Arch won seats at the 1885 Election. But, alas, at the 1886 Election, all these men, except "Mabon," lost their constituencies.

When the Trades Union Congress met at Hull, in the September of 1886, the report of the Parliamentary Committee deplored the set-back to Labour representation.

"Not so much," the report protested, "for the loss of a few seats in Parliament, as for the moral considerations to be drawn from it.

"Will those who represent the capitalists, the employing and other vested interests," the report proceeded, "divest themselves of selfish purposes and serve your cause as well as workmen can or ought to be able to do for themselves?

"There will," the report concluded, "be small chance for a just recognition of the claims of our

poorer population and all that relates to the just dues of Labour, until it is represented in the House of Commons by men who know and have experienced the privations and necessities by which the life of the operatives is constantly surrounded."

This idea of Labour representation dominated the Hull Congress, and before it closed the following resolution had been passed :—

"That, while considering it the duty of the State to provide for the official election expenses of Parliamentary candidates, and also for the reasonable payment of members of the House of Commons, the Congress is of opinion that the direct representation of Labour in the House of Commons is necessary in the interests of the working classes and of the kingdom at large, and that the workmen of the country be desired to form district funds to enable industrial candidates to contest elections, and each delegate present be requested to bring the matter before their various bodies with that object in view, and the Congress shall, at its Annual Meeting, elect a Labour Electoral Committee, consisting of twenty-three members, to be allotted to eight districts of the United Kingdom."

As a proof that Congress was, at last, really in earnest on this subject of Labour representation, it proceeded immediately to the election of the twenty-three members of the first Labour Electoral Committee, and these gentlemen were empowered to form Electoral Committees in their respective districts, and to report to the 1887 Congress, which was fixed to be held at Swansea.

I had gone down to the Hull Congress in pursuit of my avocation as a Labour journalist, and there I made the acquaintance of another Labour journalist, Mr. Maltman Barry, who turned out to be a great friend of Champion, one who did

undoubtedly exert a great influence on Champion's career.

Barry soon made himself known to me. He had, he said, studied my *Nottingham Operative*, and he was pleased to say that it did me credit. Champion had brought the paper under his notice, he continued, and then he went on to talk about Champion, and of what a pity it was that so able a gentleman should waste himself on the Social Democratic Federation.

"If Champion would take my advice," said Barry, "he would drop the Socialists and hitch on to the Trade Union movement. This new departure will give him the chance to do so. Membership of the Labour Electoral Associations cannot be confined to Trade Unionists, and I shall advise Champion to join the London district."

A few months later I learned that this had actually come to pass, and the coincidence impressed me with the strength of the influence Barry was able to exert over Champion.

Meantime, it is necessary to state the circumstances under which the rupture between Champion and the Social Democratic Federation occurred.

The Unemployed crisis of the winter of 1885 had been somewhat modified during the summer of 1886, but, as winter came on, distress became more acute, and the Social Democrats, ever ready to voice the demands of the Unemployed, conceived the idea of organising a big demonstration of the out-of-works, to follow on at the tail-end of the Lord Mayor's Procession on the 9th of November.

Sir Charles Warren, however, was now Commissioner of Police, and he made it known that any such demonstration would not be allowed. In the circumstances, the Executive of the S.D.F. recognised that it would be folly to lead unarmed

men against the police, but they determined to "bluff" up to the last moment.

Accordingly, they gave it out that the demonstration would certainly be held, and nightly meetings of the Executive were summoned to give the impression that preparations for the demonstration were afoot.

The S.D.F. version of the rupture with Champion is that he was not in favour of this policy of "bluff," and really wanted to lead the Unemployed against the police. Anyhow, wiser counsels prevailed, or the "Bloody Sunday" of November 13, 1887, might have been anticipated by twelve months. For Sir Charles Warren and the authorities were in no mood to tolerate any opportunities for disorder. The route the Lord Mayor's Procession took was guarded as strongly as the streets of St. Petersburg during the progress of the Czar. All along Fleet Street the tradesmen had the shutters up. And how relieved the public were when the day passed over without trouble may be gathered from the following contemporary account:—

"The dreaded 9th of November is almost over, and the inhabitants of London breathe freely again. The terrible things that might have come upon us in the streets of the Metropolis to-day have not come upon us at all, and people are beginning to wonder why there should have been such a scare.

"As it happens, the Lord Mayor has been allowed to parade the streets with all his show without molestation by the mob, and the Socialists have been permitted to hold their much-dreaded meeting in Trafalgar Square without molestation by the police. There has, consequently, been no sacking of the West End by the Unemployed out of the East End, no reading of the Riot Act, no shedding of blood, and not even any breaking of window glass. The day's events have passed off with just

as much interruption and little more of the business of London than the Lord Mayor's Show inevitably produces."

The writer of the foregoing account fell into one error. The Socialists were not permitted to demonstrate in Trafalgar Square unmolested by the police. The police cleared the Square when only George Bateman and Tom Mann had spoken—Hyndman, Burns, and Champion being thus effectually closed.

But the Social Democrats were in no mood to be expelled from Trafalgar Square without a protest. Accordingly, a monster demonstration was advertised for Sunday, 13th November. Sir Charles Warren did not go the length of prohibiting the meeting, but he prepared against any possibility of riot by ordering 4000 police on duty in and around the Square, and holding 500 soldiers in reserve at Knightsbridge Barracks.

At this meeting Burns was very severe on the Labour leaders. He denounced by name the Shiptons, the Potters, and the Burnetts, and said that instead of those leaders of the working classes being at that meeting to voice the demands of the workers, they were dining that day off the game presented to them the previous week by that prince of outdoor paupers, Albert Edward. Those fraudulent panderers to Royalty, he continued, begged charity from a Prince instead of helping to remove the causes that rendered it possible for princes to exist and honest men to starve.

What Burns meant is indicated by a passage in a speech he delivered on Sunday, 23rd January, 1887. On that day, in accordance with the Social Democratic policy of holding church parades of the Unemployed, Burns led 400 out-of-works to Old Battersea Church. After the service, he addressed a meeting of the men opposite the Prince's Head, and in the course of his speech remarked that they

had been asked that day to bless the Queen and Royal Family, but he considered they were already too well blessed at the expense of other people.

Burns's Republican opinions at this time even led him to condone regicide. The *South-Western Star* for April 16, 1887, reports a speech by Burns, in which he said :—

“ Lately Europe had been startled by an attempt on the life of the Czar of Russia. Great sorrow had been expressed by the papers at the attempt on the part of the men, who in Russia were only desperate, and only resorted to force and to secret societies, because constitutional methods were disallowed them. Great sorrow was shown by the *Times* at the attempts to rid the earth of a tyrant. He was sorry they did not succeed.”

It was in this same speech that Burns made his notorious “chemical parcel post” allusion.

“ He would,” he said, “ ask those men who deprecate force and extreme measures, if they did not like the idea of Joseph Chamberlain following the Czar and Lord Salisbury to heaven by means of a chemical parcel post, to join hands with those men who were trying to remove the causes which made political assassination necessary.”

That Burns was not only prepared to advocate but also to use physical force, his action on “ Bloody Sunday ” in the following November amply demonstrated.

CHAPTER XVII

“BLOODY SUNDAY”—BURNS AND CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM, M.P., SENT TO PRISON

DURING the summer of 1887 Burns, who played no part in the evolution of the Labour Electoral, was following his trade as an engineer, but not in any of the large works. His reputation as an agitator handicapped him there, and frequent victimisation followed, until he entered the employment of Mr. Lorraine, an electrical engineer, who was a member of the Democratic Club.

Lorraine had his workshop in Westminster, and I remember going there on one occasion to see Burns. He was the only mechanic employed, and his work was to act as fitter to Mr. Lorraine.

The place was one large room, very lofty, the floor and the benches littered with all manner of tools and machines used by Mr. Lorraine in his business. Electrical engineering was then in its infancy, and Burns was not tied hard and fast to his bench, as he would have been in a busier establishment.

The shop hours were eight a day, and Burns could always get off for any special occasion, and, as November drew near, those special occasions multiplied.

For the unemployed crisis was still acute. And the S.D.F., with whom Burns was still associated, continued its agitation on behalf of the unemployed. So frequent, indeed, did the meetings become, that

in October the police began to interfere with those held in Trafalgar Square.

On 18th October, Colonel Roberts, acting under the instructions of Sir Charles Warren, dispersed a Social Democratic audience, arresting twenty men. Not content with this, the police followed the Social Democrats to Hyde Park the same day, and dispersed the crowd that gathered round them. On 20th October another meeting was held in Hyde Park, from which a deputation was sent to Mr. Mathew, the Home Secretary, complaining of the action of the police. On 23rd October, a Sunday, the Social Democrats held meetings of the unemployed, morning, afternoon, and evening—in the morning on Clerkenwell Green, in the afternoon in Trafalgar Square, and in the evening at Westminster Abbey, where they attended Divine service.

In this agitation Burns played his customary prominent part.

But it was not in consequence of any act he committed at an unemployed meeting that Burns was arrested on 13th November 1887, a day known amongst the London Radicals as "Bloody Sunday."

The Trafalgar Square demonstration arranged for that day was organised by the Metropolitan Radical Federation, and its object was to protest against the arrest of William O'Brien, M.P., an Irish Nationalist, who had been arrested, and caused a sensation by refusing to wear prison dress. To compel him to conform, the turnkeys stole his breeches, and O'Brien sat for many days in the cold cell wrapped up in blankets.

"O'Brien's Breeches" immediately became a rallying cry for all Socialists, who were Home Rulers to a man, all Radicals, and all Gladstonian Liberals. And when it was announced that the Home Secretary, Mr. Mathew, had forbidden the

use of the Square for a protest demonstration by the Metropolitan Radical Federation, the delight of the Social Democrats was unbounded. That prohibition committed the Radicals to an agitation for "free speech," side by side with the Socialists. Accordingly, the Social Democrats made their preparations for a joint demonstration with the Radicals on 13th November.

On Saturday, 12th November, the Metropolitan Radical Federation made a final attempt to induce Mr. Mathew to withdraw his prohibition. A deputation, headed by Cunningham Graham, M.P., waited upon the Home Secretary. Mr. Mathew, however, proved adamantine. He consented to see Mr. Graham, but would not admit the deputation, and informed Mr. Graham that the meeting could not be permitted, and that Sir Charles Warren had orders to prevent it being held.

Sir Charles Warren's plan of campaign was simplicity itself. The bulk of the demonstrators would have to come from the Surrey side of the Thames, and by occupying the bridges he could prevent any organised procession coming near Trafalgar Square from that quarter.

These tactics succeeded in their object. There was a serious scuffle on Westminster Bridge, where the Bermondsey, Fulham, and Deptford contingents tried to force a passage, but the police were too strong for them. The procession was broken up, and in the mêlée twenty-six persons were so badly injured that they had to be admitted to St. Thomas's Hospital for surgical treatment.

But if the demonstrators could not reach the Square in processional order, they did so in units and small parties. In this way immense crowds assembled in the streets debouching on the Square, where Sir Charles Warren posted a cordon of police four deep all round, a large body of reserves inside

the Square, and had also the Life Guards within call.

In spite of this overwhelming force, Graham and Burns, who had met by arrangement at the Charing Cross Underground Station, decided to make an effort to storm the barrier. In an interview Graham gave me, he described what happened :—

“We proceeded,” he said, “to the Square from the Hotel Metropole. I was seized by the police. Two constables seized me, one by each shoulder. Another pulled me by the ear from behind, and a fourth struck me on the head with his truncheon. Other blows were struck on various parts of my body, and the policeman who cut my head was making a second blow when Burns raised his folded arms above his head and rushed between us to ward off the blow. An inspector of police was standing near, but the police did not seem to be acting under any specific instructions.”

Graham’s account of the treatment he suffered was corroborated at the Old Bailey trial by an independent witness, Sir Edward Reed, who described what he saw from a window of Morley’s Hotel as follows :—

“Before Graham reached the centre of the Square his head was bleeding. After he was in the custody of the police, and when he was quite powerless, policemen, one after another, stepped forward and dealt him blows over the head quite unjustifiably.”

Graham was not the only man maltreated by the police. In dispersing the crowds they used their truncheons so freely that between sixty and seventy patients had to be treated at Charing Cross Hospital.

For more than a fortnight after “Bloody Sunday,” Trafalgar Square was in a state of siege. On Friday, the 18th, thousands of special constables

were sworn in. On Sunday, the 20th, the Square was garrisoned by 5000 constables, 2000 specials, with 1300 specials in reserve, of whom 500 were posted at Palace Yard, and the remainder at Marlborough House.

On Monday, the 28th, the police became so violent that injuries were inflicted on a man named Alfred Linnell, from which he died on 3rd December, and the occasion of his funeral, Sunday, 18th December, was seized upon for a demonstration of sympathy the like of which had never been seen in London.

The procession to Bow Cemetery passed through Waterloo Street, the Strand, Fleet Street, and St. Paul's. It was one and a half miles in length. Hundreds of thousands of spectators lined the streets.

Amongst the pall-bearers were William Morris, Cunninghamame Graham, W. T. Stead, Commissioner Frank Smith, representing the Salvation Army, Herbert Burrows, and Mrs. Besant.

The hearse was surmounted by a black shield, bearing the words "Killed in Trafalgar Square." On the coffin was a brass plate, inscribed as follows:—"Alfred Linnell, 41, died 3rd December 1887, from injuries inflicted by police in Trafalgar Square, 28th November. Buried at the public expense, 18th December 1887."

The Rev. Stewart Headlam officiated at the grave, William Morris delivered an oration, and the singing of a "Death Song," composed by Morris, closed the obsequies.

It will be seen that public sentiment was profoundly stirred, and the interest was kept alive by the impending trial of Graham and Burns at the Old Bailey, to which they had been committed from Bow Street, where Graham was defended by Mr. Asquith, the same Mr. Asquith who became Home

Secretary in 1892, Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1905, and Prime Minister in 1908. Graham's bail at Bow Street was Mr. Haldane, best remembered as the War Minister who, in 1907, reorganised the Army, substituting the Territorials for the Volunteers and Militia. The Rev. Stewart Headlam stood bail for Burns, and he was assisted in his defence by Mr. W. M. Thompson, barrister, who had coached him on points of law at his previous trial.

At the Old Bailey trial, which began on 16th January 1888, and lasted three days, the Judge was Mr. Justice Charles, and Mr. Asquith again defended Graham, Burns defending himself, with the assistance of Mr. Thompson. The prosecuting counsel were the Attorney-General, the Solicitor-General, and Mr. Poland.

The indictment charged the prisoners with riotously assembling, to the terror and disturbance of Her Majesty's subjects. Other counts in the indictment charged them with being armed and assaulting the police.

The jury returned a verdict of "Not Guilty," on the charge of riot, disorder, and assault, and of "Guilty" on the charge of unlawful assault, and the Judge sentenced both prisoners to imprisonment for six weeks, without hard labour.

This trial and imprisonment had two important consequences. First, it brought Burns into sympathetic association with the Radicals of London generally, and of Battersea in particular. Second, it thus paved the way for his election to the London County Council in March 1889. How this occurred it is now my duty to tell. H. H. Champion played an important part in the development of the drama.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHAMPION'S MASTERFUL POLICY IN 1888—THE GENESIS OF THE DOCK STRIKE

CHAMPION lost no time in demonstrating that he meant to play a considerable part in Labour politics. A by-election in Dulwich in December 1887, three months after the formation of the Labour Electoral Association, gave him his first opportunity.

The candidates were Mr. Blundell Maple, Conservative, and Mr. James Henderson, Liberal. Mr. Champion supported Mr. Henderson, both by speech and letter, on the express ground that he was a better employer of Labour than Mr. Maple.

In May 1888 there was another by-election at Southampton. The candidates were Mr. Guest, Conservative, and Mr. F. Evans, Liberal. By this time Mr. Champion was making arrangements for the establishment of *The Labour Elector*. In his employ was Mr. George Bateman, a member of the London Society of Compositors, and afterwards, at the General Election of 1892, Radical candidate for Holborn. As he was unable to visit Southampton himself, Mr. Champion sent down Bateman to interview the candidates in the name of the Labour Electoral Association, and as the result of the pledges he obtained, Bateman, in the name of the L.E.A., advised the electors to vote for Mr. Evans, who won the seat for the Liberals, a Conservative having previously sat.

In June 1888 Champion started *The Labour Elector*, and, in the same month, three by-elections occurred. One was in Thanet, Kent. Mr. Bateman again represented Mr. Champion, and again the electors were advised to vote for the Liberal candidate, Mr. Knatchbull-Hugessen. The second election took place in the Ayr Burghs. Here Mr. Champion was represented by Tom Mann and Keir Hardie. The electors were advised to vote for the Liberal candidate, Mr. Sinclair, who won the seat from the Conservatives.

So far, Champion's intervention in politics had always been on the Liberal side, and the Liberals had gained two seats. But he now decided to run a Labour candidate for Mid-Lanark, and Keir Hardie was selected to carry the colours, Mr. Champion undertaking to find the finances, which were provided by Miss Harkness, then better known under her literary *nom de plume* of "John Law." Mr. Champion acted as Election Agent.

Thus we have reached a situation exactly similar to that at West Nottingham in 1885, the only difference being that Mr. Champion's protégé is now Keir Hardie, whereas, at West Nottingham, it was John Burns.

In March 1889 there was a by-election in Kennington. Champion declared for the Liberal candidate, Mr. Beaufoy, who won the seat from the Conservatives. Burns, as Champion's lieutenant, spoke for Beaufoy, and undoubtedly this helped him to win the Battersea County Council seat in the same month.

It was for assisting Beaufoy in this election that Burns was so warmly criticised by the S.D.F. leaders that he resigned his connection with that body, and founded the Battersea Labour League. Burns recognised that, hampered by S.D.F. dis-

cipline, he could not possibly win the Parliamentary seat in Battersea, which he had set his heart on doing.

So he parted company with the Social Democrats, and shortly after, in August 1889, the Dock Strike occurred, when Burns's lucky star rose to its zenith.

Just as the association with the Metropolitan Radical Federation on "Bloody Sunday" made Burns's calling and election to the County Council certain, so the Dock Strike virtually lifted him into Parliament. But with the genesis of the Dock Strike Burns had little to do. Others prepared the way for that historic eruption who have had very little of the kudos. These I must now bring into the limelight, and to do so will necessitate a visit to the East End.

What I saw at the West India Dock gates, Poplar, will ever be branded on my memory. There was a surging crowd of men, looking more than half-starved, waiting at the gates. To them would come a ganger, or contractor, when he wanted men, and the struggling and fighting of the wretched competitors for work was the saddest sight I ever saw.

The strong trampled the weak; there was no mercy. The weak were driven back, or held back, or shoved aside. Then when the demand of the moment had been satisfied, and the fortunate few had gone inside, the sullen crowd waited until another call caused another struggle.

I said those were fortunate who were taken on. But that is only a comparative term. The wages for casual labour were fivepence an hour, and a man might be turned off with only one hour's work and one hour's pay, and that after standing at the gate for a day in order to get a turn at all.

The dockers had absolutely no organisation, but on inquiry I learned that a Union of tea-warehousemen had been formed at the Cutler Street Ware-

house by Ben Tillett, of whom I then heard for the first time. There was also a Stevedores' Union, of which Tom M'Carthy was secretary.

Later in the year, November 1888, I heard of Tillett leading a strike at Tilbury Docks. Tilbury was too far from the centre of dockland to set an example to the rest, or the historic strike of August 1889, might have been anticipated.

However, as soon as I heard of the trouble at the West India Dock on the 14th August 1889, I rushed down to write it up. I had no idea that the strike would be any more than a temporary rupture when I went, but soon saw reason to alter my views.

Ben Tillett was the first man on the field. Tom M'Carthy joined him on the Saturday, the 17th, when the stevedores, led by Tom, struck work. The first procession into the city of London took place on Monday, 19th August. It numbered 20,000 demonstrators. By this time Tom Mann and Burns had joined the Strike Committee, and with them came H. H. Champion, who is credited with doing a lot of the organising behind the scenes. By Thursday the 22nd the Strike had become general, and on that day Tillett and Burns interviewed the Dock Directors. The day following there were 37,000 men in the procession to the city. On Sunday, the 27th, a demonstration in support of the dockers was held in Hyde Park. The procession numbered 80,000 men, and 200,000 gathered round the platforms in the Park.

It was at this Hyde Park meeting that the note of the New Unionism, which was so profoundly to modify the old conception of trade unionism, was struck. Tom M'Carthy, who presided at No. 1 platform, said they were demonstrating without the men who for many years had climbed to place and power on the shoulders of the working classes. It was time they trusted those men no longer, but

took their affairs in their own hands. Ben Tillett proposed a resolution calling upon "all true trade unionists" to assist labour to get its own rights. Burns seconded this, and said that after seeing the men outside the dock gates weak and fainting with hunger, he had sworn not to rest until their demands were conceded.

How this pledge was redeemed, and the effect it had on the fortunes of John Burns will now be told.

CHAPTER XIX

BURNS AND THE DOCKERS

ONE quality possessed by Burns, which must always be taken into account in forming an estimate of his character, was his Barnum-like ability as a showman. He had an unfailing aptitude for discovering the centre of the picture, and posing there. Hence the celerity with which he forced his way to the front rank of the leaders of the Dockers' Strike, a strike which he had done nothing to bring about, but from which he profited so much.

In the two years following upon the Dock Strike, Burns's determination to be in the front of any big movement for improving the lot of the workers became somewhat chastened. His experience during the Scottish Railwaymen's Strike, to take part in which he rushed off, uninvited, to Scotland, and which turned out to be a failure, begot a prudence which tempered Burns's eagerness. He became concerned as to the effect upon his own reputation if he were associated with a fiasco, and hung back until the signs and auguries of a success made it safe to hazard his fortunes.

I noted this prudence particularly during the Busmen's Strike in 1891.

The Busmen's strike was organised by Frank Smith, formerly a Commissioner in the Salvation Army, and the real inspirer of the social work which General Booth subsequently exploited so

profitably. Smith had left the Salvation Army, and thrown himself into trade union work. In association with Thomas Suthers, a barrister, he formed the Busmen's Union, Suthers being president, and Smith, secretary. Then they began holding midnight meetings of busmen, assisted by members of the London Trades Council, the executive of which body supported the agitation for shorter hours and better pay. Ultimately the agitation was ripe for a general strike of busmen all over London, and a certain night was announced as the one on which, after making their last journeys, the busmen were to repair to the Victoria Music Hall, over Waterloo Bridge, to initiate the strike.

On the night in question I was there in good time to report proceedings. Midnight was announced as the hour at which the meeting was to begin, and as midnight drew near the hall began to fill up with the busmen first off duty. On the platform were the Executive of the London Trades Council, and many of the less well-known leaders of trade unionism in London. Suthers took the chair, and opened the meeting.

I looked round for Burns, but he was not on view. But in a stage box, hiding behind the curtain, there he was, sitting in judgment as to whether the strike was likely to prove successful. For a time the matter was in doubt. There were many vacant places in the hall. At length, however, the men from the outlying districts, by bus loads, began to come in, and the hall filled up. Only then did Burns discover himself, pass from the stage box to the back of the platform, rapidly work his way to the front row, and in less than a quarter of an hour after that he was attempting to take the conduct of the meeting out of the hands of Mr. Suthers.

But Thomas Suthers proved his match for the moment. "Sit down, Mr. Burns," he said sternly, "I am the chairman of this meeting." And Burns had to subside.

But the rebuff was only temporary. The next day Burns, accompanied by Fred Hammill, who had succeeded him in the employment of Mr. Lorraine, was all over the West End rallying the busmen. For more than a week he was seldom off the streets. At the end of that time the busmen had won their strike, and the greatest share of the credit fell to John Burns, who had not even come in at the eleventh hour—it was the twelfth—while the men who had done the spade work, and without whom no strike would have been possible, were practically ignored.

This calculating trait in Burns's character had not developed at the time of the Dock Strike, but the other feature, the determination to be first in everything, and the rest nowhere, was already dominant. And there can be no doubt that events were so ordered that it was always the figure of John Burns that stood out heroically during that struggle.

Tillett, who was the pioneer, Tom M'Carthy, his chief lieutenant—the men on the spot—were overshadowed entirely by the importations. Tom Mann and Champion had also to play second fiddle to Burns, who took care to be in the front of every procession, could shout the loudest at all the meetings, and whose lungs of leather and throat of brass never gave way under the incessant strain.

Burns had full liberty to devote all his time to the strike. He had got the Battersea Labour League founded, and that organisation was financing him as its representative on the County Council. That made his bread and butter secure,

and he could give all the assistance needed to the dockers without fee or reward, other than the popularity that daily increased in volume.

The daily processions, always headed by Burns, grew so enormous that on one occasion it was estimated that no fewer than 120,000 were in line. Burns thus became the best known man in London. And how he was generally regarded is well brought out in an interview that appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, from which I will make an extract :—

“It was pleasant to see the good terms this doughty champion of Labour is on with all classes. Even the employers bear him no ill-will, and as for the workers, everybody who recognised him had a cheer or a smile for him. The City Police, too, touched their hats to him, and nodded pleasantly to the ex-convict of Trafalgar Square.

“It is something extraordinary,” Burns said, “the enthusiasm of the people. Here, in this very street this morning, an old woman on crutches raised herself to the window and gave me a wave of the hand as I passed. Nothing on earth has touched me more than that. And such meetings as we have had ! Why, I never saw anything like them. I do wish you had been with us on Tower Hill. It was grand, sir ; it was grand.

“There we were with enormous rows of warehouses built and stored by the produce of their work, as I told them, and then I caught sight of the Tower, and something put it into my head to remind them how Sir Thomas More, the originator of the Eight Hours Movement, was once imprisoned there. He must often have looked out of those windows at the busy homes of men, and the ceaseless flow of old Father Thames. Perhaps he was even looking now, I said, and bidding us be of good cheer and remain true to the ideals of Utopia. The allusion caught on splendidly. And as for the

morale of the men, it is splendid. We are bound to win; we are winning."

And win the men did, as all the world knows. On Saturday, September 14th, the strike, which had begun on August 14th, was settled on the following terms:—

"1. The 5d. per hour to be raised in the case of all labour not piecework on and after November 4th next to 6d. per hour, and 8d. per hour overtime. No pay for meal times.

"2. Men called in not to be discharged with less than 2s. pay, except in the case of special short engagements in the afternoon.

"3. Present contract work to be converted not later than November 4th into piecework, under which the men will be paid not less than 6d. per hour, with 8d. per hour overtime, and the surplus, if any, to be divided between them, all payments being made under the supervision of dock officials.

"4. The hours of overtime at the docks and up-town warehouses shall be from 6 P.M. to 8 A.M.

"5. The existing strike to be terminated, and all the men connected with dock and river work to return to work forthwith.

"6. The strikers and their leaders undertake that all labourers who have been at work during the strike shall be unmolested, and treated as fellow labourers by those who have been on strike. In any employment for which men offer, when the strike is ended, the directors will make no difference between those who have and those who have not taken part in it, and will not, directly or indirectly, show resentment to any of the men who have participated in it."

What really broke the back of the resistance of the dock directors was the unbounded public sympathy with the dockers, especially in Australia. On Monday, September 9th, the Lord Mayor handed

over to the Strike Committee—all received by the morning post—£1200 from Adelaide, £500 from the Broken Hill miners, £1000 from Brisbane, and £4000 from Melbourne, and by the same post came an advice that £1200 was to be sent from Sydney. These munificent contributions from Australia had a malign influence, later on, on the career of Champion. When the Australian Shearers' Strike was raging in 1891, the shearers expected that London would reciprocate. Champion, however, who happened to be in Australia, cabled Burns not to send contributions, as the strike was sure to fail. For this Champion was denounced on his return to England, and he never regained popularity with the London workmen.

Meantime the effect of the Dock Strike on the career of Burns is our concern. Writing ten days before the strike ended, the London correspondent of the *Birmingham Post* summed up the situation as follows:—

“Whatever may be the issue of this strike, one thing is quite clear. It will make John Burns inevitable as a candidate for some London constituency.

“He considers that Battersea ought to take him, but the negotiations there came to nothing. He declined to stand as a candidate of the Liberal Association, either as a Radical or as a Labour candidate, declaring he would stand alone.

“The Liberal Association, a thoroughly representative body, declined to be stifled in this way, and selected Mr. Lawson Walton, but Mr. Burns's friends say that he will go to the poll, and that a well-known soap manufacturer will guarantee the expense.”

To this point had Burns attained in the first week of September 1889. In the same week the Trades Union Congress was sitting in Dundee.

Keir Hardie was making his third attack on the Liberal-Labour position, as embodied in the person of Mr. Broadhurst, M.P., the secretary of the Congress, and, incidentally, along with Cunningham Graham, attempting to persuade Burns to stand for Dundee at a by-election caused by the death of Mr. J. F. B. Frith, M.P., a colleague of Burns on the London County Council.

CHAPTER XX

BURNS AND THE DUNDEE BY-ELECTION, 1889

I AM indebted for an account of the negotiations with Burns anent the Dundee vacancy in 1889 to David Lowe, author of *A Scots Wanderjahre*, who subsequently was sub-editor of Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*. I was too busy following the incidents of the Dock Strike to attend the Dundee Trades Congress, which took place in the week beginning September 3rd, the closing week of the Dock Strike.

In 1910 Lowe wrote some reminiscences of those early days for *Forward*, the organ of Scottish Socialism, in which paper, by-the-bye, this romance originally appeared in serial form. From Lowe's reminiscences I extract the following:—

“During the Congress week, on 3rd September, Mr. J. F. B. Frith, M.P., died in Switzerland, and the local vacancy thus caused brought about a by-election.

“A demonstration was held on the 5th September, in front of the High School gate, on behalf of the London Dockers, at which speeches were made by Cunningham Graham, M.P., Keir Hardie, Dr. Aveling, and Mrs. Graham. From the demonstration sprang a meeting of Socialists and Labourists favoured to direct representation of Labour in Parliament.

“This small meeting of enthusiasts was held in Tally Street Hall, and the intention was to run

John Burns for the vacancy. I knew, personally, no one present.

"The chair was occupied by Graham, but only for a few minutes, because ere the business was scarcely under way he got into hot water. One of the audience inquired whether Burns was to be run as a Liberal, and the question not being answered to the satisfaction of certain parties, the meeting got slightly out of hand.

"Graham lost his temper, and in a towering rage told the faithful that they were only fit to be represented by capitalists, and thereupon he bounced out of the hall. Hardie whispered to a young man next him to follow Graham, and then quietly took the chair. The young man, as I discovered in later years, was John Carnegie.

"The meeting was soon brought round by Hardie, and we were all willing (without qualification) to take a hand in the contest. Meanwhile Graham went striding on like a man possessed, out past the Nine Wells, with John Carnegie at his heels. At last he cooled down, and deigned to offer John a few epigrams on the stupidity of the working man.

"The return journey was more leisurely, and when they reached the foot of Tally Street, Graham stopped for a little, and looked up at the hall. John said nothing, and Graham walked away again. This little comedy occurred several times, until he proposed that they should go and see how the meeting was getting on, and they entered the hall to find the meeting unanimous for Burns.

"A telegram was despatched that same night asking Burns to contest the constituency, and a reply was received next morning acceding to the request. Public feeling was aroused, and a mass meeting of Socialists, Labourists, and sympathisers was held on the Shore Terrace, on Saturday,

7th September, at which a resolution was carried unanimously endorsing the candidature of John Burns. The speakers were Graham and Hardie.

"In the evening a meeting was held in the Y.M.C.A. Rooms, when over 250 names were handed in to form a committee, and John Addison and Joseph Carr were appointed joint secretaries. Immediately afterwards a letter was received from Burns, which caused the Committee great uneasiness. He began to water his assent, and stipulated that the approval of all the Trade Unions and Labour bodies should be guaranteed before he entered upon the contest.

"Meanwhile, the Liberals had been interviewing some of their prominent men, who, without exception, refused to stand against Burns. Then there arrived on the scene one who in his day carried through many difficult transactions for the Liberal Party, and in the end received poor reward. I refer to Mr. Marjoribanks, afterwards Lord Tweedmouth. He came and went in one day.

"It was supposed that he returned to London, where he made an offer of the Battersea seat at the first election to Burns, on condition that he withdrew from Dundee. At any rate, a letter was received on the following day withdrawing his name, and giving as his reason that he was to contest Battersea, of which he had a preference. Our men at once requisitioned Tom Mann to stand, but he declined, and eventually our committee and enthusiasm collapsed like a cask without hoops."

This independent description of the Dundee episode, besides throwing a light on the characters of Graham and Hardie, is valuable as affording early evidence of that diplomatic prudence which soon began to distinguish Burns's conduct. It is not conclusive as to whether Burns really did receive a guarantee from the Liberal Whip about

Battersea, but that something of the sort was in the wind was proved not much later when the sitting Liberal member, Mr. Morgan, announced that he did not intend to seek re-election for Battersea, but would contest Ashton-under-Lyne, a Tory seat.

But Burns had not yet burnt his boats as a Socialist, as his speeches at and after the Liverpool Trades Congress of 1890 amply demonstrate.

Prior to attending the Liverpool Trades Union Congress of 1890, which was his first appearance in the Parliament of Labour, as it was then the fashion to call the Congress, Burns made a speech in Battersea, a passage from which will indicate the spirit in which he went.

“He believed,” he said, “that at the forthcoming Congress many of the useless fossils and reactionaries who had held the office of general secretary to their respective unions, who had used their positions to chloroform the members, and incidentally of drawing an annuity of £200 or £300 for their services while they had neglected the wages and hours of the rank and file of their unions—those men, he believed, would have to take a back seat.”

Burns’s anticipations proved correct. The legal Eight Hours’ resolution was carried. Mr. Thomas Birtwistle, the nominee of the Lancashire Weavers, who had come out high in the ballot for members of the Parliamentary Committee, refused, in consequence of the Eight Hours’ vote, to assume office. Mr. Slatter, of the Typographical Society, who got the highest vote amongst the unsuccessful candidates for the Parliamentary Committee, for the same reason refused to take Mr. Birtwistle’s place. Consequently Burns, who was the second highest amongst the unsuccessful candidates, was called upon to act on the Executive, and accepted the post.

Again, it will be seen, Burns’s lucky star was

in the ascendant. Hardie, as will be shown later, had done the spade work; Burns came in just in time to reap the glory. And, as was usual with Burns, he immediately assumed all the credit for the changes wrought in the composition of the Congress.

On the Saturday morning, after the result of the first ballot for the Parliamentary Committee had been announced, and before the resignations of Birtwistle and Slatter had been intimated, Burns was interviewed by the representative of the *Star* (London).

“The House of Lords of Labour,” he said, “is done with. Henceforth the Congress will cease to be chiefly a place for men who aspire to get factory inspectorships and magistracies from the powers that be. We have dealt the death-blow to the caucuses and wirepullers. Future Congresses will be more democratically constituted, managed in a more business-like fashion, and less influenced by the permanent officials, who too often use their positions to chloroform those that they represent.”

If this frequent use of the phrase “chloroform” be not sufficiently conclusive as to his antagonistic attitude towards the old school, perhaps the following passage from the *Star* interview will clinch the matter.

“When the report of the Congress is read,” he said, “it will be found that whilst the old Unionists were firing shots of prejudice at me, my friends were passing resolutions. The Socialist character of the Congress surprises ourselves.

“The incorruptibility of the new Unionists is shown by the fact that one of us refused the bait of ninety votes in favour of his election on the Parliamentary Committee—the ninety would have placed him second on the list—because the condition was that he should vote for Shipton for the secretaryship.

"To sum up: Shipton off, Fenwick on, Pickard on to help Fenwick with the eight hours. Jack, Uttley, Matkin, to support.

"An hour later (added the *Star*) Mr. Burns might have added, 'and myself,' as by the withdrawal of Birtwistle and Slatter he is now on the Parliamentary Committee."

Burns's election to the Parliamentary Committee quickly brought about a change in his tone.

On Sunday, September 20th, speaking at the Washington Music Hall, Battersea, he reported on the Trades Congress. In the course of his speech he said:—

"I know Labour candidates who are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, nor good red herring. I know Labour candidates who are much wanting in courage, who are very much like an Egyptian chameleon, who are red five minutes, green three, blue two, and yellow one, who vary their political colours and opinions in proportion as they are forced to do to get the votes of certain workmen with whom they come in contact. We said that the resolution on Labour representation was not sufficient until it was accompanied by this condition—'That no Labour candidate should be elected to Parliament, or elsewhere, unless he is in favour of the Social Democratic programme—nationalisation of the land, the mines, the railways, and the means of production, distribution, and exchange.'"

Burns's speech at the Congress on the subject of Labour representation, had provoked hot replies from two of the Liberal-Labour M.P.'s., John Wilson and Fenwick.

Wilson was very angry with Burns, and challenged him emphatically to prove that the Labour Party in Parliament were tied to the Liberal Party. He claimed that the Labour members were equal to

any one in the Congress in intelligence, and if Mr. Burns would not withdraw he hurled the lie back in his teeth.

Fenwick uttered a similar challenge, deprecating the insinuations made about the Labour members. Insinuations, said Mr. Fenwick, were easy to some minds, and even congenial. The statements made about the Labour members should be made openly, so that they could meet them and fight them.

Commenting on these speeches in his Battersea address, Burns said :—

“I can only say that, if in the next Parliament, they advocate the cause of Labour, if they condemn the action of the Liberal capitalists and Tory landlords with half the vigour they showed towards their friends at the Congress, they will have little to fear of the adverse criticism of their friends of the Labour movement at the next Congress.”

Burns was now a colleague of Mr. Fenwick on the Parliamentary Committee, and it will be noticed that already there was a modification of his personal attitude towards his new friends. But, on the general question, Burns remained as yet a Socialist. Summing up the achievements of the Liverpool Congress, Burns, in his Battersea report, said :—

“I am glad to say that altogether sixty resolutions were passed. Now listen to this ‘old’ and ‘new’ trade unionists. Out of those sixty resolutions, forty-five were nothing more nor less than direct appeals to the State and Municipalities of this country to do for the workman what trades unionism, ‘old’ and ‘new,’ has proved itself incapable of doing. Forty-five of the sixty resolutions were asking for State or Municipal interference on behalf of the weak against the strong. ‘Old’ trade unionists from Lancashire, Northumberland, and

Birmingham, asked for as many of these resolutions as the delegates from London, and it is a remarkable and significant fact that nineteen out of twenty delegates were in favour of the 'new' trade union ideas of State interference in all things except a reduction of hours, and even on this we secured a majority that certainly entitles we Socialists to be jubilant at our success."

On the whole it will be seen that the Burns of 1890 was still the Burns of the Nottingham by-election of 1885, of the Old Bailey oration of 1886, of "Bloody Sunday," 1887, and of the Dockers Strike of 1889. But the years 1891-95, the five years of his membership of the Parliamentary Committee, in three of which he had also a seat in Parliament, told a different tale.

It will be convenient, therefore, at this stage, to throw a light on the psychology of Burns, to enable the reader to better understand subsequent developments, not so much in his character as in his actions.

CHAPTER XXI

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF JOHN BURNS

THAT the reader may be assured my reading of Burns's pyschology is unbiased, I will put into the witness box his great friend and advocate, Mr. W. M. Thompson, the barrister who defended him on his two appearances at the Old Bailey. Subsequently Mr. Thompson became editor of *Reynolds's Newspaper*, and on the 28th of May 1908, he was entertained at a complimentary banquet at the National Liberal Club. To make the relations between Burns and Thompson quite clear, I quote the personal passages from the speech Burns made in supporting the toast of "Our Guest," proposed by Sir Walter Foster, M.P., created a peer in 1909 under the title of Lord Ilkeston. Burns, it is necessary to remember, had now became a Right Honourable, and President of the Local Government Board in the Bannerman Cabinet of 1906.

"I first met Mr. Thompson," Burns said, "at a turbulent meeting in Hyde Park, on the top of a reservoir, which I and William Morris were holding against the mob, whilst Mr. Bernard Shaw was hanging on to some railings, and two or three gentlemen I see present were doing their best to arrest all of us. I and Mr. Thompson became close personal friends and political associates.

"Two or three years later I met Mr. Thompson under exalted, but to me, less pleasant circumstances. It was in a spacious building, now under-

going reconstruction between Holborn and Ludgate Hill, and on that occasion Mr. Thompson was my guide, philosopher, and friend, and from his position of a counsel in the well of the court the guest of to-night did everything that a kindly heart, a sympathetic mind, and an able tongue could do to get me acquitted. Mr. Thompson defended me with ability, eloquence, and kindness, and I am glad to say that after a speech, a kind of epilogue from myself, I got off, but Mr. Thompson had done the best part of the work, and had also succeeded in securing the acquittal of a then colleague, Mr. Hyndman, whom I am glad to see is also here to-night, testifying to Mr. Thompson's services to the people.

"It would not be proper for me, as a Cabinet Minister, if I did not come here to testify to Mr. Thompson personally, as I now do, for the way he has stood by me since that time, and has done his best to help me to the position I now occupy.

"My last word is this—and it requires some little moral courage to say it—I view with positive disfavour, with some regret, and if it does not cease, with some apprehension, the tendency on the part of what is known as the Labour movement to isolate itself from those who are not manual workers. I, of course, associate myself with everything that makes for the economic, social, and political independence of Labour, but there are in this room to-night at least a hundred men who have never laid a brick, forged a piece of iron, worked at a lathe, or sawed a plank, and for Labour to deliberately, and narrowly, and foolishly cut itself off from the best, the brightest, and choicest spirits of mankind, simply because they have not been hewers of wood and drawers of water, is to cut off the power for their own advancement in the

future, and to inflict upon themselves a disability which one day they will find the folly and mistake of doing.

“I have a right to say this in connection with our guest of this evening, because Mr. Thompson is a lawyer. There is a foolish prejudice in advanced ranks against lawyers in general, and some lawyers in particular. I never shared it, because I used their services, but it speaks volumes for Mr. Thompson that he should have kept on with the brilliance he has the work with which he has been associated. Such men as he have helped the cause of the poor, and have fought for the Labour movement, and I hope we shall see in the political, social, and Labour movements of the future that diversity of personality, that catholicity of aim, that community of impulse, which has brought us here to-night to honour the guest of the evening.

“In my judgment ideas ought to be the bond, aim the watchword, and tolerance the method, and achievement the reward, and I say that because, on the Continent of Europe, from which in many respects we can get much experience and some example, there is not the class difference in democracy which there is a tendency in certain movements to display at this moment in this country. The House of Commons wants, in the interests of the poor, the disinherited, the weak, the lowly, the best thoughts, the best minds, the best tongues, and the best services. It matters not to me whether they be lawyer or Labour leader, writer or dustman, commercial man, artist, or journalist, so long as they share the aims of the poor, and the effort that the poor themselves are not capable of putting forward to the extent that they might, simply because they are poor. We must gather into the Labour movement more men of the type of our guest of this evening. Labour should do nothing to dis-

courage these men of other classes from coming in to help the poor, and harnessing themselves to the chariot of the oppressed, and yoking themselves to the service of the Commonwealth."

The tone of this speech was very different to the denunciations Burns frequently indulged in of men like Champion (after he had cut loose from that gentleman). Such men he described at the Liverpool Trade Congress as "retired touts, retired clergymen, and German blacklegs," and declared that the unions "should free the cause from the scallawags who were fastening on to the movement, and who, to serve their ends, would degrade the workers." That was Burns's general attitude towards upper and middle-class men who identified themselves with the Labour movement so long as he remained in it. When, however, he had left the movement for a Cabinet post, but still wanted to retain a connection with Labour, his eloquence in favour of Liberal politicians in like stress took on the phase reported above.

But this is by the way. At present we are analysing Burns's psychology, and I am now going to cite the testimony of Mr. W. M. Thompson, the man so generously lauded by Burns, who cannot be regarded as a prejudiced witness.

On July 5th, 1896, Mr. Thompson wrote as follows in *Reynolds's* :—

"For some years we have been receiving letters criticising in severe terms what the writers described as the arrogant attitude of Mr. John Burns, the member for Battersea, towards most persons with whom he was associated and on most questions with which he dealt in his public career. . . .

"As Mr. Burns becomes older he becomes more intolerant, and in the class among whom his activities are now expended there is now a firm impression that he is suffering from an acute

attack of the disease which in America is known as 'swelled head.' . . .

"Many were surprised that we refrained from reprobating Mr. Burns on the occasion of various of his escapades which were generally condemned in Democratic circles. We were waiting for the reformation. It has not come. Mr. Burns degenerates daily. The time for plain speaking has arrived.

"The member for Battersea has seemingly a notion, which can only be born of the most extreme form of vanity, that when he holds a certain opinion everybody else must be wrong.

"This diseased egotism carries him so far that, when men do not recognise that he is always in the right, he showers upon them a coarse and vulgar invective as if they were his personal enemies.

"There is hardly a prominent man in the Labour movement whom he has not treated in this way. He must always be on the house-tops shouting, 'I, John Burns, have done this or said that,' and if the spectators do not applaud him he pelts them with epithets carefully manufactured in the seclusion of his study at Lavender Hill. Omit the personal pronoun 'I' from his speeches, and what remains?

"We can now begin to understand the position of the Social Democrats. 'It was impossible,' they said, 'to work with John Burns.' And most people with whom he has been associated tell the same story. Yet though Mr. Burns rails, nobody hangs himself. . . .

"No one doubts that the Dockers Strike has turned Mr. Burns's head. He still dreams of dramatic marches at the front of a dockers procession. He misses the daily notoriety which the chapter of accidents gave him on the occasion of the great strike. And he will manufacture notoriety at any cost

"There are hundreds of men in the Labour movement of this country who have done infinitely more good than Mr. Burns, but they have not that gentleman's voracious appetite for flattery. Nor are they eaten up with jealousy of their co-workers. They allow others a due share of the credit for their performances, and they disdain to work the press oracle as Mr. Burns has done.

"In some characters a noble dignity accompanies them through life. Others, like the proverbial beggar on horseback, on their journey towards respectability, assume buffoon airs of superiority, and, valiant tongue-bullies, bespatter with mendacious Billingsgate those whom they have to thank for whatever little notoriety they may have gained. . . .

"It is time, therefore, that a stand was made against the irresponsible insolence of Mr. John Burns. . . .

"God protect our people from the Socialism of a man like Mr. John Burns who, if he had his way, would be as autocratic as a Czar of Russia.

"We have had occasion to speak strongly of other Labour Leaders before. In the interests of the workers we shall fight against 'boss' leaders of any description.

"Let Mr. Burns be warned in time by the fate of the frog in the fable, who swelled with pride until he burst, and when fluent nonsense is trickling from his tongue, remember our friendly advice.

"He has become ridiculous; he may yet save himself from being despised."

The above testimony from Burns's candid friend supplies the key to his character, and will enable the reader to better understand his attitude towards developments in the Labour world from 1888 onwards, developments that we have slurred over hitherto, but must now retrace our steps to more fully describe.

CHAPTER XXII

THE DEBUT OF KEIR HARDIE

I HAVE not the shadow of a doubt that what drove Burns into the Liberal camp was his chagrin on discovering that the Labour movement insisted on developing on lines of its own, and disregarded him, while it listened with growing respect and attention to the advice of Keir Hardie.

I have now, therefore, to trace the career of Hardie, in so far as it influenced that of Burns.

The full story of Hardie's life and work will come more appropriately in the sequel. For the present only so much will be related as may enable the reader to understand Burns's disgust at the emergence of the man who ultimately outrivalled him as a Labour Leader.

When I got down to the Trades Union Congress of 1887 at Swansea, and took my seat next to Maltman Barry at the press table, Barry was full of expectation at what was going to happen.

During the year that had elapsed since Hull I had seen little of him. He had secured a connection with the papers that made him independent of the odds and ends of news, and it was seldom our paths crossed.

When I had met him he had generally something to say about Champion's plans ; that was the common bond of interest between us.

In this way I learned that Champion had joined the London District of the Labour Electoral, but



J. KEIR HARDIE (as in 1892)

had only been coldly welcomed by the Executive of the district.

"But," said Barry, as soon as we had settled down, "all that is going to be altered. Keep your eyes and your ears open for a young fellow from Ayrshire, who is present to represent the Ayrshire Miners' Union. Graham has coached him up about Broadhurst and Fenwick, and I think I know who coached Graham. But no matter. Just watch events, and if you can, give the incidents of the discussion that will arise a good show in your papers."

"You may depend I shall do my best to get a good show," I said, "if only on account of the lineage, but what is it all about? Suppose you coach me."

Which Barry kindly proceeded to do.

In this way I learned that an attack was to be made on Broadhurst and Fenwick, M.P.'s, the latter having been returned at a by-election, on the ground that they were betraying the cause of Labour by assisting candidates at the by-elections whose records, from the Labour point of view, were not all that might be desired.

The indictment would be based on two cases, the support of a Mr. Hill in Brixton, and of Mr. Brunner at Northwich. Broadhurst was implicated in both instances, but Fenwick only in that of Mr. Brunner.

The allegation against Mr. Hill was that, being a dealer in locks, he had, in 1879, obtained a commission from the War Office, and had supplied the locks ordered, not from British lockmakers, but from America. Moreover, on being charged with this, he had justified his action by alleging that the British workmen were idle, drunken, and inefficient, and that he would be sorry to have any dealings with them. During the year Mr. Hill had fought

a by-election at Brixton for the Liberals. Mr. Broadhurst had gone to speak on his behalf, and though informed of his antecedents, had persisted in so doing.

The Brunner allegations differed in respect that they dealt with the current wages and conditions at the works of Brunner, Mond & Co. of which Mr. Brunner was the principal partner. Subsequently the works were placed on an eight hours' day, and the wages improved, but, at the time the Swansea Trades Congress was held, workmen were employed eighty-six hours a week on the day shift, and eighty-two hours on the night shift, for wages averaging under 30s. per week. As the dividends amounted to twenty-five per cent. or fifty per cent. on the original capitalisation, it was felt that a candidate who was responsible for such a state of affairs ought not to be supported on the platform by Labour M.P.'s, and Messrs. Fenwick and Broadhurst had done so. To add to the gravity of the indictment against Mr. Broadhurst, it was alleged that he had become a shareholder in the concern, and it subsequently transpired that Mr. Broadhurst, in the same month that the Congress was held, did sell a number of shares in the company, an admission that he, when all the circumstances were brought to his notice, regarded the holding of such shares as somewhat of an inconsistency.

With this information in my possession, I was pretty well primed with the facts when Hardie rose to open his attack, the substance of which I need not repeat. It will be more interesting, as Keir Hardie was destined to play a leading part in the drama of Labour politics, to venture an impression of him as I recollect him at that time. Most of the historical portraits represent Hardie when he had become grey and bald, which

happened before he was fifty years of age, making him look much older than his years.

But at this time his hair was dark brown, and long, and plentiful. He had a bushy brown-red beard, his brow was white and spacious, not bulgy—more of the Charles Darwin type; his eyes were deep-set, giving one the impression that they were rather small—their colour was hazel; his nose was short and broad; the mouth and chin could not be seen. He was dressed in navy blue serge, and across the double-breasted waistcoat, from over the shoulder, hung several long threads of thin silver chain.

When Hardie rose to speak there was no immediate consciousness that a new force had come into action. But before he had uttered many sentences he gripped the attention of the Congress. His utterance was low and slow, but every word could be followed. As he warmed to his work his voice increased in volume, and all indications of hesitancy disappeared. Now and again he struck a top note, with a curious pathetic break in it, the sure sign of a natural orator.

As he developed his attack on Fenwick and Broadhurst, those gentlemen began to betray signs of uneasiness, and took nervous notes. But Hardie was speaking to an unsympathetic audience. He was one man leading a forlorn hope against the prevailing opinion, and there was no applause when, in delivering his peroration, he insisted that the Labour Party should be prepared to imitate the Irish Party in Parliament, and make their power felt in the same way.

Both Fenwick and Broadhurst replied to the attack. Broadhurst loftily rebuked Hardie, defended his support of Hill and Brunner, declared both gentlemen would support the Labour Party in Parliament, asserted his right to political indepen-

dence, and declared his determination to preserve it. Fenwick said that under similar circumstances he should do the same again, deprecated the attacks on Labour members as calculated to discredit them with their constituents, and maintained there were already too many parties in the House of Commons, and any attempt to establish another—even a Labour Party—would mean failure and disaster.

As, for the next eight years, these two M.P.'s shared the secretaryship of the Trades Congress between them, Broadhurst up to and including 1890, and Fenwick up to and including 1894, their utterances indicate the kind of resistance the new ideas first voiced by Hardie had to overcome.

Eventually those new ideas triumphed, but for years hard fighting had to be done, and in that fighting Hardie was ever the foremost figure. For three Congresses—Swansea, Bradford, and Dundee—Hardie fought the battle almost single-handed. At Liverpool, Burns, leading the New Unionists, came to his assistance. Broadhurst resigned and Fenwick reigned in his stead. But before the New Unionists, by forcing the Eight Hours' Day to the front, compelled Fenwick to resign at Cardiff in 1894, Burns had gone over to the Old Unionists, and, at the Congress of Cardiff, in 1895, carried his famous resolutions declaring delegates ineligible who were neither working at their trades nor acting as permanent paid officials of their unions, a decision that expelled Broadhurst, Hardie, and Burns himself from the Congress.

I am again anticipating, but my excuse must be as before, that it is convenient, occasionally, to lift the corner of the veil to give a glimpse of developments in the future, developments that prove the correctness of the saying—Truth is stranger than Fiction.

But to return to Swansea. Notwithstanding Mr. Fenwick's dictum that any attempt to establish a Labour Party in Parliament would mean failure and disaster, the Congress approved of the steps taken by the committee elected at Hull to establish a Labour Electoral Association.

The report of that committee stated that ten Labour Electoral Associations had been formed, and others were being promoted. It was decided to form a National L.E.A., and its constitution and programme were drawn up. The programme included State Payment of Members and Election Expenses, Adult Suffrage, Free Education, Nationalisation of Land, Poor Law Reform, and the abolition of State Bounties.

Barry was by no means pleased with this programme. It offended him both by its sins of omission and commission. There was no mention of the legal Eight Hours in it, and the inclusion of the abolition of State Bounties was directed against the Fair Traders, with whom he was in sympathy.

"However," he said, "it will do to be going on with, and when Champion gets his foot firmly planted in the organisation, the programme will soon be licked into shape. Meantime, mark this," he added, "before the next Congress see if this young fellow, Keir Hardie, is not run for Parliament at some by-election. Burns has become too big for his boots since his Old Bailey oration. Besides, he has not as yet a footing in the Trades Union Congress, an essential to the foundation of a real Labour Party. Hardie has such a footing, and, depend upon it, he will make good use of it."

This was in September 1887. In the following month the agitation begun which resulted in the arrest of John Burns and Cunningham Graham on "Bloody Sunday," November 13th, 1887, an event I have already described, and in the following year,

1888, Hardie fought his first Parliamentary contest at a by-election in Mid-Lanark, following upon which, Hardie, Champion, and Cunningham Graham founded the Scottish Labour Party.

Graham was the first president of the Scottish Labour Party, and as such I must sketch him into the picture.



CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

(From the oil-painting in the Glasgow Corporation
Art Gallery)

CHAPTER XXIII

CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM—DISILLUSION WITH LIBERALISM — CHAMPION'S "NINETEENTH CENTURY" ARTICLE

ROBERT BONTINE CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM had been elected to the House of Commons at the General Election of 1886 as a Liberal member for Stirlingshire. He made his maiden speech in Parliament in January 1887, and in the same year introduced an Eight Hours' Bill for Miners, after which he was regarded more as a Labour representative than an orthodox Liberal.

A man more unlike the typical representative of Labour it would not be possible to imagine. One of the handsomest men of his generation, the best idea I can give of his appearance is to say that he might have stepped right out of a canvas by Velasquez.

He was a tall, lithe, young man, browned by exposure on the grassy plains of Mexico, where he had spent some years ranching, and generally dressed in a suit of brown Melton cloth. His clothes were fashionably cut, he stood erect on somewhat long feet, and he had a habit, as he spoke, of running his aristocratic hands backwards through a thick crop of upstanding dark hair. His face was long and thin, the length accentuated by the high narrow forehead and the pointed brown beard, and he had intuitive eyes, which burned and glowed with animation.

Graham, as I have said, introduced an Eight Hours' Day for miners. Finding that no facilities were offered for its discussion, he withdrew the Bill and substituted an abstract resolution. Faring no better with this, and discovering that the Liberals were no more sympathetic towards Labour than the Tories, he unburdened his heart of the following reflections on the need for a Labour Party :—

“No! The British House of Commons, the People's House of Commons, cannot spare half-a-day to discuss the question of an Eight Hours' Bill for the miners. Plenty of days and long weary night sittings for every other subject under heaven, but for the toilers under the earth not even a discussion. Why should we bother about them?

“But sometimes, sitting here in the House of Commons, and reflecting on the various shams of life, I wonder, I marvel if sometime or other these blind Samsons will ever break their chains.

“An impulse comes, and who shall say it is a wrong impulse, to endeavour (though I know it would be no good) to try to explain to these men how they are humbugged. Here all is wrong in this political life of ours, for how is it possible that a Parliament composed as ours is, can ever take up Eight Hours' Bills, or anything of the sort?

“No man like myself, no matter however much he may sympathise, can ever properly represent them; and I cannot help thinking that if we but only had ten or twelve Labour representatives from Scotland, that it would have been impossible to burke so important a question; 600,000 men who, I believe, are practically unanimous in the wish to have an Eight Hours' Day by Act of Parliament are no more heeded here than if they were 600,000 sheep, but then, in some respects they are so like sheep—so patient and dumb. I want the miners to think whether it is, after all, worth their while to

take such a keen interest in politics as they do, if politics are to lead to nothing so far as they are concerned. Of course, when one comes out of a pit, dirty and begrimed, it is very refreshing to hear that Mr. Gladstone has defeated Lord Salisbury on some question of Egyptian policy."

Naturally, a man like Graham would welcome the appearance of Keir Hardie as a Labour candidate in Mid-Lanark. Champion and Hardie were both at that time members of the Labour Electoral Association, and in taking the action they did, were running counter to the declared policy of the Labour Electoral Association, which was to discourage three-cornered contests. Accordingly, the Executive made it known that it could only endorse Hardie's candidature in the event of the Liberal Party adopting him, and thus enduring a straight fight with the Conservatives.

Champion made every effort to secure this adoption, interviewing the Liberal Whips, writing letters to the papers, entreating the good offices of Charles Stewart Parnell, but all in vain. An official Liberal candidate was adopted.

In these circumstances it is to the credit of Champion and Hardie that they did not flinch from the ordeal. Hardie went to the poll, and came out at the bottom, with 617 votes to his credit.

It was really from this Mid-Lanark fight, though Champion and Hardie did not secede from the Labour Electoral Association until after the next Trades Union Congress, held that year, 1888, at Bradford, that the Scottish Labour Party, which was not actually formed until 1889, dates its origin.

The Scottish Labour Party was the John the Baptist of the Independent Labour Party, from which it differed mainly in this particular, that whereas the I.L.P. scornfully refused to take either the Tory or Liberal party into account in

arranging its candidatures, the Scottish Labour Party generally did, as at Mid-Lanark, attempt to get its candidates adopted by the Liberals.

But even the Mid-Lanark procedure gave a considerable shock to the ordinary Labour sentiment of that time, and Mr. Champion found it necessary to explain and defend his policy in an article contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* for July 1888, under the title of "The New Labour Party."

After describing the condition of the people, he referred as follows to the Labour M.P.'s:—

"It is not now necessary, though it would be easy, to speak with severity of some individuals that claim to represent the interests of Labour. There were, in the last House of Commons, some dozen Liberal-Labour representatives. These are now, have always been, and ever always will be, adherents of the Liberal Party, ever ready with a fidelity fully recognised by their employers, to put the political necessities of the Liberals before the rights of the working classes. There is some evidence that the contemptuous criticism to which they have been subjected has had a disquieting effect upon these gentlemen, but there is no sign that they are able or willing to put the rights of labour before the interests of Liberalism."

Having thus impeached the Liberal-Labour M.P.'s, Champion proceeded to indict the recently formed Labour Electoral Association, which had proved a broken reed in Mid-Lanark, and the S.D.F.

"Besides these faithful henchmen of a party, not more distinguished," he wrote, "by its anxiety, when in opposition, to catch the Labour vote, than by its flagrant disregard, when in power, of the social condition of the labourer, there are 'advanced' organisations which can certainly not be accused of speaking with bated breath of the rights and wrongs of the working man.

"Of these some profess a regard for constitutional methods, and confess their inability to persuade even themselves that they can achieve anything in the immediate future, by quarrelling, as bad workmen are said to do, with the tools at their command. They declare for the social emancipation of the worker by political means, and then decide that all action must be deferred until after the establishment of manhood suffrage and the abolition of the House of Lords.

"Your downright, thoroughgoing Democrat, however, has no respect for such constitutional methods. For him political reforms are a means, but not in any way a necessary means, to an end. The purest form of political democracy may in the future supersede the class rule he now denounces, but the fire-breathing Democrat is in the present determined—by methods not explained, and at a date which is constantly receding—to impose on the majority the will of the faithful few who agree with him. It is not wonderful that this policy fails to gather the forces necessary to secure its success."

Mr. Champion then went on to ascribe the miseries of the working classes to competition.

"The possessors of wealth are enabled," he said, "by the competition of the workers, to procure the means of life at the least possible cost; the workers, having no means of living save by the barter of their labour, are compelled, in the competition for permission to live at all, to underbid one another until the wage is the least that will support life, and the day's work the longest the human frame will endure. Nay, these limits are often passed, and the life is not sustained, and the human frame breaks down. These are the simple facts of the case, and so long as this competition is allowed to go on these facts will remain."

This led Mr. Champion into an argument for the limitation of the working day to eight hours, and a declaration that—

“The Labour Party sets before itself the task of furthering the interests of the working class, by securing the legislative restriction of competition through the compulsory reduction of the hours of labour. The question which will interest the practical politician—who knows the difficulty of rousing the House of Commons to action on such matters, and the immense power of vested interests in that House—is how the force can be found to bring such matters into the sphere of practical politics. A precedent—a successful precedent—exists. Methods once practised by others are now being used by the Labour Party, with a success which fully warrants a belief in certain and speedy triumph.”

The successful precedent Mr. Champion claimed to find in the policy of the Irish Nationalists, and he showed that the intervention of a Labour candidate in Mid-Lanark had caused “the incorporation in the speeches and addresses of the other candidates of much of the Labour legislation which found so much favour among the electorate.” In conclusion, he prophesied that candidates elsewhere “will also learn the lesson and accept the inevitable with good grace. Inured by habit to the process, they will ‘find salvation’ on labour questions when thus pressed home to them, even more rapidly than they have done in regard to Home Rule.”

I have given this summary of Champion’s article in the *Nineteenth Century*, because it shows a modification of his policy from that of the time of the West End riots, and laid down the lines of policy on which he subsequently acted. Henceforth he was a man of one idea—the Eight Hours’ Day—and of one method, the application of pressure on

the orthodox political parties through the agency of an Independent Labour Party after the manner of the Irish Nationalists under the leadership of Parnell. Incidentally, he cast himself for the rôle of the Parnell of the Labour Party.

But the action he had been taking, culminating in the running of a candidate at Mid-Lanark, aroused the hostility of the Executive of the Labour Electoral Association, and at their next conference, held at the same time and place as the Trades Union Congress of Bradford in September 1888, they virtually expelled Mr. Champion by carrying a resolution declaring that no man could sit as a delegate at the Annual Conference or be run as a candidate by the L.E.A. who was not or had not been a manual worker.

Before the following Trades Congress (Dundee, 1889), Champion, Graham, and Hardie had established the Scottish Labour Party, and at the Dundee Congress, Hardie returned to the attack on Henry Broadhurst, M.P., the secretary to the Parliamentary Committee.

On the report of the Parliamentary Committee being presented, Hardie moved the following resolution :—

“That this Congress, recognising that a strong feeling of resentment is arising in the minds of trade unionists in this country against the action of Mr. Henry Broadhurst, M.P., in having supported at elections those who were sweaters and unfair employers of Labour; by his declaration that he will continue in this course in the future; and, further, by the fact that he has admittedly held shares in a public company where men are shamefully overworked and underpaid, declares that he is not a fit and proper person to act as secretary of the Parliamentary Committee of the trade unionists of Britain.”

Hardie's resolution, after a speech by Broadhurst in his own defence, was rejected by 176 to 10, but the spirit and ability he displayed made such an impression that before the 1890 Congress, which met at Liverpool, he had been adopted as the Labour candidate for South-West Ham. Also, at the Liverpool Congress, Hardie was reinforced by Burns and a large number of new Unionist delegates, with the result that the principles for which Hardie had contended at Swansea, Bradford, and Dundee were formally recognised by large majorities, and Mr. Broadhurst resigned the secretaryship, being succeeded by Mr. Charles Fenwick, M.P.

It was at Liverpool that Burns and Hardie met. It was also at Liverpool that circumstances arose which had an important influence on my own career as a Labour journalist, and that brought me right into the midst of the movement for the establishment of an Independent Labour Party.

CHAPTER XXIV

I AGAIN BECOME A LABOUR EDITOR

IN my introduction to this story I remarked that it had never been my lot to take a prominent part in the incidents recorded. But it is now necessary to qualify that statement. Not that I withdraw the word "prominent." Without taking a prominent part I did, for the four years 1891-94, figure as an essential factor in the evolution of the Labour Party.

It came about through the Liverpool Trades Union Congress, when I first met the proprietor of the *Workman's Times*. For some months I had been contributing London correspondence to the *Workman's Times*, which was published at Manchester, in conjunction with *The Factory Times*, the organ of the Lancashire and Yorkshire textile trades. *The Factory Times* had been established soon after the collapse of my *Nottingham Operative*. Indeed, it was the sight of a copy of that unfortunate publication which, so he subsequently assured me, inspired its promoter with the idea of *The Factory Times*. So, after all, the arrow I shot at a venture did find a mark.

One thing leads to another, and the success of *The Factory Times*, which had a great vogue amongst the cotton and woollen operatives, suggested the feasibility of the *Workman's Times*, which was intended for general circulation. And so it had come about that my London correspondence became a feature, and I made a few shillings weekly thereby, which is more than I could say for my own venture.

which had been its forerunner. In this manner the bread I had cast on the waters in 1885 began to return to me, after many days, in 1890.

But the *Workman's Times* was already showing signs that it might share the common fate of all Labour papers aspiring to a national circulation in those days. Mr. Champion's *Labour Elector*, started in 1888, had been defunct for some months, and Champion himself was in Australia to recuperate his health. He was due back in 1891, and intended to contest Aberdeen whenever the General Election happened, but his journalistic ambition was, for the moment, sated.

The *Labour Elector* had had one flattering period, during the Dock Strike, when its circulation boomed. John Burns and Cunninghamame Graham joined its editorial board. But they had never any control over its policy. Champion, assisted by Maltman Barry, who acted as sub-editor, inspired its articles, and shortly after the Dock Strike, Graham and Burns were so disgusted at an attack made on Ernest Parke, editor of the *Star*, in connection with Parke's conviction for libel, that they withdrew from the board.

It will throw a light on the autocratic character of Champion, which was responsible for so much that happened to him later on, if I say here that, in the same issue of the *Labour Elector* in which he printed the repudiation, by Graham and Burns, of the attack on Parke, he republished all the offending matter repudiated by his colleagues. After that they had no alternative but to sever their connection with the *Labour Elector*, the publication of which was suspended in a few months.

“Suspended” is the proper word to use here, inasmuch as the *Labour Elector* was revived for a few months in 1893, when Champion made his last attempt to capture the Independent Labour move-

ment, an episode I have described in my *Early History of the I.L.P.*

With this digression we will leave the *Labour Elector*, and return to the subject of the *Workman's Times*.

The *Workman's Times*, as I have said, was in a bad way at the time of the Liverpool Congress, and its proprietor determined, as most of his staff were delegates at the Congress, to take them into his confidence and ask for their advice. As I was also at the Congress, sitting at the Press table, I got an invitation too.

To my astonishment, when the staff assembled, I discovered that it was composed of the prominent members of the Executive of the Labour Electoral Association. The secretary, T. R. Threlfall, was not there, but G. D. Kelley of Manchester, Uttley of Sheffield, Holmes of Leicester, Davis of Birmingham, and Millington of Hull, were present. Indeed, practically the whole bevel set of the men who were responsible for the Labour Electoral Association.

There was also James Mawdsley, the general secretary of the Amalgamated Operative Cotton Spinners, a leading member of the staff of the *Factory Times*. Mawdsley was the man who supplied the brains to the Trades Congress Parliamentary Committee. He was a Conservative in politics, and, at the General Election of 1900, contested Oldham as a Conservative-Labour candidate, with Winston Churchill as a colleague. Unfortunately he met his death through an accident shortly after.

It was this man who so played upon the vanity of John Burns that he became the most reactionary member of the Parliamentary Committee. It was Mawdsley who drafted the famous resolutions which altered the constitution of the Trades Congress, and made it ineligible for men like Keir Hardie and

Tom Mann to sit as delegates. Mawdsley drafted these resolutions, but it was Burns who fathered them, although in so doing he had to commit suicide so far as attendance at Congress was concerned.

Well, all these gentlemen and others I have forgotten, assembled at the hotel where the proprietor of the *Workman's Times* stayed, and partook of dinner. Then, after the tables had been cleared, the condition and prospects of the paper were discussed, and suggestions invited. But what could such a crew, with not one practical journalist amongst them, contribute of value?

When the guests, looking somewhat crestfallen, for they had expected a very different evening, had departed, I stayed behind and unburdened my soul.

"You are," I said, "in quite the wrong hands, and on entirely the wrong lines. These men are too local in their outlook, and too hidebound in their politics. I suppose you are paying them all?"

"Up to now," he said, "I have paid practically as much out in salaries as I have drawn for the sale of papers."

"You must stop that," I said. "There is any amount of unpaid assistance ready to volunteer for a paper of the right sort. Such a paper should be published in London. It should deal with Labour politics from the Independent point of view, and it should not be afraid of Socialism. More than half of the 500 delegates at this Trades Congress are Socialists, and more than 90 per cent. of the young men. It is with them and their views that the future lies. Publish a paper that will appeal to the new ideas, and with the machinery at your command I don't see why you should not score a bigger success than even your textile paper has proved."

I could see that my host was impressed, but he said nothing definite that night.

The next morning, however, he came to me at the

Congress Press table, and asked me if I could spare him an hour. He had, he said, an important proposal to make, which could not wait, as he must return to Manchester by noon.

I immediately adjourned with him to his hotel, and there and then he offered me the editorship of the *Workman's Times*, with a London office, if I would undertake to run the paper on the lines I had suggested. I said that with one assistant at the London end I had every confidence I could fill the paper with better matter than he was then getting, and that it would not cost a penny, and he told me to go ahead. My assistant-editor was Mr. Vaughan Nash, who subsequently became principal private secretary to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, when he was Prime Minister in 1906. Mr. Nash was taken over by Mr. Asquith on Sir Henry's death, and, I have no doubt, largely inspired Liberal-Labour legislation.

But that is by the way. It was under these circumstances, however, that I was appointed editor of the *Workman's Times*, and began what was, during the next four years, the most fruitful period of my life. It was for only four years that the *Workman's Times* lasted, but that was quite a patriarchal age for a National Labour paper to attain in the 'nineties of the last century. And before it followed its many contemporaries into the limbo of unsuccessful (financial) Labour journalism, it did one useful thing. It brought into existence the Independent Labour Party, for which the Labour Electoral Association in England, and the Scottish Labour Party across the border, had prepared the ground. When one remembers that the National Labour Party of 1900, derived directly from the I.L.P., and that the United Socialist Party of this year of grace, 1935, and the Socialist Government it supports is descended from the

National Labour Party, one is gratified to have had a share, however humble, in the beginning of such a great movement.

It is of those humble beginnings that I have now to tell.

It was in September 1890 that I made my arrangement with the proprietor of the *Workman's Times*. By the end of the year I was ready to take over the paper. In Christmas week, 1890, the Manningham Strike, Bradford, occurred. And it was from the Manningham Strike that the Bradford Labour Union, the first of the strictly Independent Labour organisations, and the nucleus round which the Independent Labour Party ultimately formed, arose.

Moreover, it was as the Parliamentary candidate of the Bradford Labour Union that Robert Blatchford, in the days before his paper, the *Clarion*, was founded, first laid down the principles of uncompromising independence in political affairs which distinguished the Independent Labour Party.

Blatchford emphasised these principles, and the essential Socialism of the I.L.P., on every occasion during his short candidature for East Bradford, a candidature eventually abandoned because of his rupture with the *Sunday Chronicle*, and the absorbing work of founding the *Clarion*. In the interregnum Blatchford, for a short season of eight weeks, wrote six columns weekly for the *Workman's Times*, partly topical notes, and partly economic argument. When Blatchford left us for the *Clarion*, I took up the parable, dealing principally with the necessity of political independence. Ultimately I made an appeal to the readers of the paper for the names and addresses of those in favour of the establishment of an Independent Labour Party. During 1892 no fewer than 3500 such names and addresses came to hand, and

week by week the adherents formed themselves into local branches of the still nebulous I.L.P. In this way some eighty branches were established in that year, and on January 13th, 1893, delegates from these branches and some outside bodies met at Bradford and formally instituted the I.L.P.

During all this time Champion, who had returned from Australia in the latter part of 1891, was making every effort to capture the *Workman's Times* as a means to dominating the I.L.P. Failing in this he re-issued, in January 1893, concurrently with the Bradford conference, the *Labour Elector*, most of the writing in which was done by Maltman Barry, his sub-editor. In all this Champion was financed from the soap subsidies, and the newly-elected National Administrative Council of the I.L.P., of which I was a member, found themselves in the unhappy position that they were compromised by Mr. Champion's irresponsible activities. Some one had to bell the cat, and I undertook to do it. Those who are curious about this episode will find the story related in detail in my *The I.L.P.: Its Origin and Early History*. Suffice it here to say that the controversy resulted in Champion disgustedly shaking the dust of the I.L.P. from his feet and returning to Australia, a disappointed man, principally because he was in too much of a hurry to allow events to develop naturally. Had he exercised more patience he might have found his way into Parliament, where John Burns and Keir Hardie, both his protégés, had secured seats at the General Election of 1892.

With this explanation I must now bid good-bye to Champion and return to a description of the relation between Burns and Hardie in the Parliament of 1892-95.

CHAPTER XXV

KEIR HARDIE IN PARLIAMENT

THE ante-Parliamentary experiences of Burns and Hardie were both like and unlike. The points of parallel were these.

Both men had been associated with Champion, who had found the money for both in their first essay to enter Parliament. In each case the relationship with Champion had relaxed, but in neither, at the time Burns and Hardie entered Parliament, had it been finally severed.

Both Burns and Hardie had made their mark in the Trades Congress as assailants of the Old Unionists, and especially of Henry Broadhurst, M.P., as typifying that school in its opposition to the legal Eight Hours' Day and its friendliness to Liberalism in politics.

Both men had won their seats in Parliament in virtual defiance of Liberalism. Burns consistently declined to become the nominee of the Battersea Liberal Association. Hardie made no approaches to the South-West Ham Liberal Association. Yet both the Liberals of Battersea and South-West Ham, choosing the least of two evils, declared for the Labour candidates just prior to the polling day.

Both Burns and Hardie were, at the time of their election to Parliament, avowed Socialists. True, Burns had discarded the Social Democratic Federation, but he still held by its Socialist doctrines. To balance this Hardie was a member of the Fabian Society, and took a delight in empha-

sising his Socialist beliefs. His formula was that he was a Democrat in politics, and a Socialist in economics.

On the whole, judging from the known antecedents of the two men, those were justified who believed that Burns and Hardie would work hand in hand together in Parliament.

But, while the points of likeness were so plain, they were really surface likenesses only. The two men differed essentially in temperament and character.

Burns had burnt out the fierce enthusiastic zeal that distinguished him up to the time of his election to the London County Council and his leadership of the Dock Strike. Politically, his campaign became parochial, confined strictly to the constituency of Battersea. Economically, Burns was obsessed with the problems involved in the administration and good government of Greater London—the area of the London County Council. Moreover, he was already experiencing the seductive influence of Lord Rosebery, the first chairman of the L.C.C.

Not so Hardie. His missionary zeal glowed with greater fervour day by day. Already he was the virtual leader of the Scottish Labour Party, which had sufficient vigour to run eight Independent candidates at the 1892 election. Contemporaneously with that election the foundations of the English Independent Labour Party were being laid at Bradford, where Ben Tillett was the candidate of the Labour Union; at Manchester and Salford, where Blatchford was gathering the forces together; at Halifax, where almost immediately the first of the I.L.P. by-elections was to be fought, and at many other places too numerous to mention. Hardie was as yet unknown in these English districts, but his prophetic eye foresaw a great field for usefulness in the English provinces imme-

diately his calling and election for South-West Ham became secure.

To sum up—Burns, immediately he was elected to Parliament, seems to have been overcome by an exposition of prudence. Massingham, then Lobby correspondent for the *Daily Chronicle*, took him in hand as coach, and impressed him with the importance of not sinning against the conventionalities. As Burns said to me, he had made up his mind not to make a fool of himself in Parliament. Hardie, on the other hand, deliberately set himself to make war on the Parliamentary conventions. To him, Parliament had no value except as a platform from which he could appeal to the gathering cohorts of Labour in the provinces.

Now, if Burns had been so much the superior in ability as he imagined, Hardie might have been compelled to follow Burns's lead. But, to his astonishment, Burns discovered, as did the whole House of Commons, that this uncouth apparition in a glengarry cap and purple comforter had command of a perfect House of Commons style of address. He proved that in his maiden speech, delivered on Tuesday, February 7th, 1893, in moving an amendment to the Address on the Unemployed question.

I here quote certain passages from a descriptive account of the scene contributed to the *Workman's Times* by the lamented "Elihu" (Samuel Washington), the author of a series of illuminating pamphlets, whose early death was a great loss to the Labour movement:—

"After the commotion and bustle of the division upon the previous amendment had subsided, and honourable members had trooped back into their places, the member for West Ham was called upon to move his amendment relative to the unemployed in a House inspired by a peculiar air of curiosity.

"The House was quite full, and as Keir Hardie, with quiet deliberation, rose to his feet, honourable members settled themselves in their places with an air of assumed unconcern, as being unwilling to exhibit any vulgar curiosity as to what this man of the people might have to say now he was among them.

"By slow degrees as—still with the same quiet deliberation—he proceeded to state his case for the unemployed, honourable members deigned to pay a more direct attention to him, finding the gear a man chooses to place on his head by way of covering to be no really reliable sign of the quality of brain that may lie under it, for this man—whose cap and muffler had been a matter of derision to them—appeared now to be something more than cap and muffler, and from commencement to close of a clever and incisive speech he held the House in closest attention, and dexterously hoisting now one now another section of the House upon the point of his spear, showed a play of skill for which honourable members seemed to have been unprepared.

"As Hardie passed from point to point in his temperate, intelligent statement of the claims of the common people, the House appeared to realise in some measure the phenomenon that had come along in a cap and scarf, and in a pair of ill-fitting trousers. For the first time the governors of the people, who have governed so long for their own profit, are come face to face with one of the people whom they have governed. A man who can stand and look out at them from clear, honest eyes, who is not there to ape their dress and manners and affect to be ashamed of his own class, but who is there as the first of a new type of legislator, to whom they are slowly, perhaps, but surely to give place. A man who is there as the advance guard of an army who will render clear the meaning of

the phrase, that government shall be of the people, by the people, and for the people.

“Perhaps the most amusing feature of the incident was the change which gradually stole over the two front benches as Hardie unfolded his message to the House. The occupants of these benches at the outset had disposed themselves in the customary variety of attitudes prepared to lend, say, half an ear to the new member, and were stirred with just the faintest curiosity, and a slightly supercilious curiosity at that, to hear what was coming. The Right Honourable A. J. Balfour was at his limpest, and, together with the rest of the youthful flower of the Conservative Party, seemed to feel it an awful bore, you know, but something that must be endured. John Morley contemplated the speaker with a mildly philosophic gaze. Harcourt looked contemplatively at a pile of paper upon the table, and the Grand Old Man lay back with his chin in his breast looking at the floor.

“As Hardie developed his points these two usually impassive front benches visibly stirred. When Hardie tripped the Liberals on the protection business, Balfour gathered himself sufficiently to turn round and look over his shoulder at him, and Gladstone reached a book from the table, and, assuming to read it, kept a furtive eye on him during the rest of the proceedings; and by-and-by, when Hardie sprung another point on them, the Old Man turned swiftly with a remark to Harcourt, then as swiftly to the one next him on the other side, and subsided into watching again. By the time Hardie got through, they were all eyes and ears.

“Upon the principle of saving his best wine for the last, Hardie brought his speech to a conclusion by an appeal to the Irish Party. These unemployed, he said, all told number four millions or more; they are a nation. If the Queen’s Speech

had contained no mention of Home Rule, you who represent Ireland would have brought forward an amendment to the Address with no consideration as to whether or not it would imperil the Government. There is no mention of this nation of the unemployed in the Queen's Speech ; why should any consideration of imperilling the Government prevent your supporting an amendment on their behalf ?

"Then, by way of climax, his voice deepening and becoming even more earnest, he said, in tones that rang through the House, I am told my amendment, if it should pass, will be a vote of censure on the Government. It is meant as a vote of censure ; any Government that can ignore this question of the unemployed, and that yet claims to represent and guard the interests of every class of the community, is unworthy the confidence of the House of Commons and of the nation.

"And that concluded a memorable and epoch-making speech."

Burns was not in the House to support Hardie. He had a good excuse for not being present when Hardie moved his amendment, seeing that he was at Halifax helping the Labour candidate in the first of the three-cornered contest fought by the Independent Labour Party, which had been organised on a national basis only the preceding month at Bradford. The election occurred in the week Hardie moved his amendment, the I.L.P. candidate, John Lister, polling 3028 votes, as against 4294 cast for the Conservative, and 4617 for the victorious Liberal.

As yet, it will be seen, there was no open rupture between Burns and Hardie, but his intervention in the Halifax fight was the only assistance Burns ever gave to the candidates of the I.L.P., and not long afterwards Burns and Hardie began to drift definitely apart in the House of Commons.

CHAPTER XXVI

BURNS AND HARDIE AT CROSS PURPOSES

THE success achieved by Hardie in his maiden speech in Parliament established him as the undisputed leader of the Independent Labour Party movement.

He had been training for it for some years. His association with the Labour Electoral Association, his secretaryship of the Scottish Labour Party, and his election for South-West Ham were all steps to the position. But if Burns, after his election for Battersea, had recognised the signs of the times, instead of regarding the nascent I.L.P. as likely to be an ephemeral organisation, the leadership might have fallen to his lot.

Hardie, in all the months intervening between the General Election of 1892, and the formation of the I.L.P. in January 1893, had been cultivating the English provinces, then opened up to him by his success in South-West Ham. He had been ready to go anywhere to address meetings in connection with the new movement. When the Trades Union Congress met at Glasgow in September 1892, Hardie took the chair at a meeting at which authority was given to convene the Bradford Conference. When the Conference assembled Hardie was voted to the chair. Then he went right from the Conference to the opening of Parliament, and set his seal to the leadership of the new movement by the speech described in the previous chapter.

By this time Hardie must have become convinced that it would be hopeless to expect to work harmoniously with Burns. He had deferred to him during the short session of 1892, suggesting this and that course, and offering to support Burns if he would do something. When, however, Burns refused to make a move, Hardie had the courage to go ahead.

Similarly, in the matter of the Unemployed Amendment to the Address, Hardie had volunteered to second such an amendment if Burns would move it. But Burns's ardour for the unemployed had cooled considerably since the days of 1886-87. On the very day that Parliament opened in 1893 the unemployed were demonstrating near Westminster, and their ranks were broken by a baton charge of the police. But this outrage, which would have fired Burns's blood in the old days, had no power to move him now. His attitude seemed to be summed up in the paraphrase—

John Burns is in Parliament ;
All's right with the world.

Unable to get Burns to move, Hardie, with the result we have seen, himself proposed an amendment on the unemployed question. Burns's negative attitude began to be commented upon, and my notes in the *Workman's Times* to display a tinge of impatience.

For example : On Monday, February 20th, two weeks after Hardie, Burns made his maiden speech in the House of Commons. My comment was as follows :—

“ Burns made his maiden speech in Parliament on Monday night in the discussion on the introduction of the Registration Reform Bill. By all accounts the speech was a success, and gave proof of his

ability as a debater. But the subject was not of national interest. Burns was not sent to Parliament to defend the County Council from its enemies. One speech on the unemployed question will awaken louder reverberations than a hundred speeches on the question whether, the London County Council, having the power of nominating superintendents of registration, will be likely to abuse that power, and, if they do not, can as much be said for County Councils in rural districts?

“Personally, I would like to see Burns get about the country more than he does. His committee (the Battersea John Burns Wages Fund Committee) are doing neither him nor the Labour cause any good by keeping him tied so closely to his County Council and Parliamentary work.”

I quote the foregoing, because it sums up the feeling that was beginning to be entertained about Burns. In the following issue of the *Workman's Times* this feeling came to a head on receipt of the following letter and resolution:—

“Sir,—At a specially convened meeting of the Battersea Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, held on Friday, February 24th, the enclosed resolution was passed unanimously, with instructions that the same should be forwarded to you for insertion in your next issue:

“That this meeting of members of the Battersea Branch of the Social Democratic Federation considers the action of John Burns in not supporting the amendment of Keir Hardie in the House of Commons *re* the unemployed, seeing the unemployed question is the pivot upon which the whole social problem turns, deserving of severe censure; and, further, they strongly condemn his subsequent statement at the Washington Music Hall on Sunday, February 19th, 1893, that

had he been in the House he would have voted against it."

On receipt of this communication I wrote an article which, as it describes the situation then existing, I venture to transcribe. It was headed "*John Burns v. Keir Hardie: Which is Right?*" The article read:

"This resolution, coming from an organisation in Burns's own constituency, raises a grave question which can no longer be shirked. It is quite time that the Labour Party in the country had an understanding with the Labour Party in Parliament. John Burns and Keir Hardie are regarded as their Parliamentary leaders. If, on almost every occasion on which the Labour question comes before Parliament, John Burns and Keir Hardie take different views, then the Labour Party in the country ought to know which of these men it is advisable to follow.

"There have been three crucial points on which Keir Hardie and John Burns have differed. First, there was the question as to on which side of the House they were to take their seats. Hardie declared that it was the duty of the Labour Party in the House always to sit in Opposition until they were strong enough to form a Labour Government. Burns was anxious that the Labour Party should sit on the Liberal benches. Hardie's arguments prevailed, and when Parliament assembled, after the General Election, Burns and Hardie took seats with the Opposition. In justice to Burns, however, we should like to have a statement of the reasons which induced him to declare in the first instance for sitting with the Liberals.

"Next came the question of the autumn session. Hardie was anxious that the new Parliament which had been elected at a cost of so much expense and anxiety, should at once set to work to discuss social

problems, such as the problem of the unemployed. He pointed out that this could be done while the Cabinet were drafting their Government Bills. Burns objected to this proposal, and declined to help Hardie in any way. The result was that Hardie had to go outside the Labour Party for a seconder to this motion, which was quashed on a technicality. This robbed us of the opportunity of hearing Burns's reasons against Hardie's proposition for an autumn session. But it is not yet too late to give them. If Hardie was wrong and Burns was right, the Labour Party should know it, and we invite Burns to make a candid statement why he declined to support Hardie on the question of an autumn session.

"We come now to Hardie's amendment to the Address on the unemployed question. Burns was not in the House when Hardie's amendment came up for discussion. He was at Halifax speaking for John Lister's candidature. The *Westminster Gazette*, however, had previously stated that Burns would vote, if he voted at all, against Hardie. Reports also came to us from Halifax that Burns was opposed to Hardie's amendment. We declined to credit these statements unless we had the authority of Burns for them. It now appears that he has since stated publicly at a meeting of his constituents that he would have voted against Hardie if he had been present in the House. This is serious. We have not such a numerous Labour Party in Parliament that we can afford to have divided counsels on these questions of policy. We have heard Hardie's statement of the reasons for his action; now let us have Burns's. We invite him to make his policy plain, and if he thinks that Hardie is wrong on the three questions we have named, or on any one of them, to make his statement to the country through the columns of the *Workman's Times*. He will be heard with the respect due to his position and his past career,

and instead of these resolutions of 'severe censure,' we may have a better understanding all round, and more united action in the future.

"So far Burns's Parliamentary career has been a disappointment to his best friends, amongst whom we claim to be numbered. It is a great grief to thousands of workmen—not only in his own constituency, but all over the kingdom—to find Hardie and Burns at variance; and we trust, as a result of this appeal, that in future they will work together more amicably than has been the case so far. We have all a soft place in our hearts for Burns, but we cannot allow the recollection of past services to warp our judgment of his present policy. Either Hardie is wrong, or Burns is wrong. Which is it?"

The answer to this appeal did not come from Burns direct, but from the secretary of the John Burns Wages Committee, and was in the following terms:—

"Sir,—The following resolution was unanimously passed last Saturday at a meeting of the members of the John Burns Wages Fund Committee: 'That this meeting fully approves of John Burns's action in not supporting Mr. Keir Hardie's amendment to the Address.'"

My comment on this letter was—

"I suppose that's all right. So long as those who pay Burns his wages are satisfied what occasion has any one else to grumble? For all that, I heard many inquiries on Sunday in Trafalgar Square as to why Burns was not present. Surely Achilles has not retired to his tent! A Trafalgar Square demonstration without Burns as the central figure is something strange."

At this demonstration, which was on behalf of the unemployed, the "central figure" was Keir Hardie, who was rapidly superseding Burns as the recognised leader of the new movement.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS IN BATTERSEA

BURNS's consistent support of the Government did not go long without reward. From the *Workman's Times* of July 22nd, 1893, I quote the following account of a significant incident:—

“A London correspondent gives currency to the following story: A pleasant interchange of courtesies between Mr. Gladstone and Mr. John Burns was witnessed in the Government division lobby last night by those who happened to be in the immediate neighbourhood. While the fifth of the long series of divisions was progressing, the Prime Minister was in the crush of members waiting for the doors to open in the narrow portion of the lobby which separates the turnstile from the tellers. Some minutes had to elapse before any forward movement was possible, and in this interval Mr. Gladstone entered into conversation with his near neighbour, saying amongst other things how satisfactory the first two divisions had been for the Government.

“Suddenly the personality of the man to whom he was talking seemed to come home to the right hon. gentleman, and turning suddenly he asked, ‘Have I the pleasure of speaking to Mr. Burns?’ The answer being in the affirmative, Mr. Gladstone asked, ‘May I shake your hand?’ and then went on to tell pathetically how his sight was failing, and how at times it was simply by something in

the contour of the person or in the tone of his voice that he was able to recognise anybody. From this the conversation passed to other things until the doors opened, and the mass of members streamed past the tellers.

"One thing said by each of the interlocutors is worth preserving. 'Hard work,' said Mr. Burns, 'makes work, and makes one love it.' To which sentiment, so much after his own heart, the Grand Old Man replied, 'May you live for many, many years, Mr. Burns, to put that principle into practice.'"

When one remembers the aloofness Mr. Gladstone preserved towards the ordinary member of Parliament, one feels more than a suspicion that this rencontre was not altogether accidental. The probability is that Mr. Gladstone had been told that a little politeness towards Mr. Burns might tip the scale in which he was balancing between loyalty to his old professions of Socialism and Labour, and his new Liberal environment.

As showing how far Burns was travelling towards a definite rupture with his old Socialist comrades, I quote the following passage from a leading article in the *Workman's Times* of the same date as that containing the account of the meeting with Mr. Gladstone:—

"An election of more than ordinary interest is pending in Battersea, owing to the resignation of Mr. James Tims, the colleague of Mr. John Burns on the London County Council.

"Right from the formation of the London County Council, Mr. Burns and Mr. Tims have been the representatives of Battersea, and as they were both workmen, and were the only two workmen returned to the first County Council, it was long the boast of Battersea, and of Mr. Burns in particular, that Battersea was leading the way in Labour representation.

"Well, Mr. Tims has now resigned, and there was an opportunity of selecting a successor from the ranks of the working classes, but the Battersea Labour League, by forty votes to seven, have decided to nominate Mr. Willis, a gentleman who is described by Mr. Verdun, secretary of the London Building Trades Federation, as 'not a workman, not a Socialist, not a trade unionist, and not a teetotaller,' qualifications, Mr. Verdun went on to say, which Mr. Burns had previously held to be necessary.

"The consequence is that the Battersea Branch of the Social Democratic League have nominated Mr. H. B. Rogers, a member of the S.D.F., and a trade unionist, and the London Building Trades Federation, at a special conference consisting of eighty-five delegates, have passed a resolution requesting all trades unionists to support H. B. Rogers, 'the only *bona fide* Labour candidate,' and protesting against the way in which an official Liberal has been foisted on the constituency, while at the annual demonstration of the Navvies' Union, held in Regent's Park, on Sunday, resolutions were passed at all the platforms to the effect that Battersea ought to be represented by a working man, and that Mr. H. B. Rogers was the only candidate worthy of support.

"Notwithstanding all this endorsement, not only from inside but outside the constituency, the *Daily Chronicle* calls upon Mr. H. B. Rogers to retire on the express ground that 'Mr. Burns ought to be the best possible judge of Socialist tactics in Battersea, and he, we observe, not only supports Mr. Willis with all his strength, but has nominated him.' We have here all the materials for a very interesting election, without taking into account that there is a Conservative in the field who hopes to take advantage of the split amongst those

who have hitherto supported Messrs. Burns and Tims.

"The election is interesting because of the effect it may have upon the position of Mr. Burns himself. Mr. Burns cannot both eat his cake and have it. Mr. Burns cannot exercise his deservedly great influence to smooth the way of an official Liberal to a position he could not hope to secure without his aid, and at the same time retain the support of the Social Democratic Federation, who, notwithstanding their personal quarrel with Mr. Burns, have always voted for him at the polls. There is no branch of the Independent Labour Party in Battersea, or the members would be compelled by the very terms of their personal pledges to take sides with the S.D.F. The two trades unionist bodies already quoted have taken the same side.

"Mr. Burns has taken his stand, and will no doubt carry his man, but it may be at a cost he has not yet estimated. Already correspondents are threatening retaliation when Mr. Burns presents himself for re-election. We should deplore any such opposition to Mr. Burns, and therefore we regret what we cannot but condemn as a false step on the part of Mr. Burns and the Battersea Labour League, acting doubtless under his influence and advice."

As anticipated, Burns carried his man in. True, Mr. Willis only polled 2817 as against 5163 cast for Mr. Burns the year before, but he had the majority. As this election marks the parting of the ways with Mr. Burns, I make no apology for quoting passages from the leader I wrote at the time :—

"'To Mr. Burns, more than to anybody else, belong the honours of the Battersea victory.' Thus the *Daily Chronicle* (London) on the Battersea County Council election.

"Verily, the whirligig of time brings about startling reverses, and success, as well as adversity, makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows. Who would have prophesied, when John Burns was the Social Democratic Federation candidate for the representation of Nottingham in Parliament, that in this year of grace, 1893, we should see the same, yet not the same, John Burns fighting with all his might against a nominee of the S.D.F. That he has done so, witness the testimony of the *Daily Chronicle*: 'The senior member for the division has put in some fourteen days of the hardest labour that has ever been incurred. . . . He has worked early and late in organising, in canvassing, and in speaking, and he has now the satisfaction of knowing that the cause which he has espoused has triumphed over all opposition.'

"That there may be no mistake as to the 'cause' Mr. Burns 'has espoused,' this description of Mr. Willis is given by the *Daily Chronicle*: 'Mr. Willis . . . was one of the founders of the Battersea Liberal and Radical Association, and succeeded Mr. B. L. Thomson as secretary. . . . Mr. Willis is now president of the Battersea Liberal and Radical Association.' We need read no further.

"To account for this extraordinary change of front, Mr. Burns is compelled to put forward the vain theory that the nomination of an S.D.F. candidate was solely inspired out of spite against himself. Stripped of all the sophistries with which Mr. Burns is attempting to confuse the issue, the plain facts of the Battersea election are these:

"The Battersea Labour League went to the nomination of a candidate with its mind made up to select Mr. Willis and nobody else. The first condition laid down was that the candidate must be a Battersea man, and that he must be able to support himself. Mr. Burns feared, as he has

himself confessed, the addition of another claimant to a share in the Wages Fund, hence the condition that the candidate, whoever he was, must be able to support himself. Seeing that only one-third of the John Burns Wages Fund, again on his own admission, is subscribed in Battersea, we fail to see why the selection of a colleague was restricted to the inhabitants of the district.

“But even the difficult conditions laid down would have been surmounted had the Battersea Labour League accepted the nomination of Mr. Verdun, the secretary of the London Building Trades Federation, himself a Battersea man, and the paid servant of a body of workmen who would gladly have supported him on the County Council without asking for a share of the John Burns Wages Fund. Mr. Verdun, a representative trade unionist, was passed over for Mr. Willis, the president of the Battersea Liberal and Radical Association. We, and the friends of Labour representation throughout the country, want to know the reason why. Was there some compact with the Liberals to satisfy which Mr. Burns has been compelled to throw overboard every principle of Labour representation he has hitherto professed ?”

Notwithstanding these developments in Battersea, Burns still proclaimed himself to the country at large as a Socialist and a believer in Labour representation, and at the Belfast Trades Congress, in September, 1883, took a prominent part in the discussions on the Trades Congress scheme for Independent Labour representation drawn up by the Parliamentary Committee, of which Burns was a member, in accordance with the instructions given at the Glasgow Congress the year previous.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BURNS INVEIGHS AGAINST "BOGUS" LABOUR PARTIES

THE outstanding features of Burns's declarations at the Belfast Trades Union Congress were, first, a declaration of war against the I.L.P., and second, a reiterated avowal of his belief in Socialism.

The Parliamentary Committee's scheme for Independent Labour representation was as follows :—

LABOUR REPRESENTATION—FINANCIAL

"1. That a separate fund be established for the purpose of assisting Independent Labour candidates in local and Parliamentary elections. Contributions to such fund to be optional.

"2. Each society desiring to affiliate with the movement shall subscribe annually to the election fund the sum of 5s. per 100 members.

"3. The administration of the aforesaid fund to be entrusted to a committee of thirteen persons (including secretary and treasurer), who shall be elected annually at the Congress by and from the delegates representing the contributing societies.

SELECTION OF CANDIDATES

"1. The selection of candidates in every case to rest with the localities in the first instance. If at any time, however, it should be impossible to secure a suitable local candidate, a candidate may

then be selected by the locality from a list of persons approved by the committee.

"2. All candidates receiving financial assistance must pledge themselves to support the Labour programme as agreed upon from time to time by the Congress."

When this scheme came before the Congress an amendment was moved by James Macdonald, and seconded by Pete Curran, to make the last clause read : "All candidates receiving financial assistance must pledge themselves to support the principle of collective ownership and control of all the means of production and distribution, and the Labour programme as agreed upon from time to time by the Congress."

In support of this Socialist amendment Burns spoke. He said he would support it because it affirmed a principle that they, as working men, must stand or fall by—if not now a few years hence. He supported it because it affirmed a principle which cut right to the kernel of the Social and Labour problem—it stripped all the husks off the party politics, whether Liberal or Tory, and off five or six of the bogus Independent Labour Parties that had come into existence. The time had come when they should adopt a distinctive Labour programme and a definite object to arrive at.

Encouraged by the cheers this back-hander at the I.L.P. evoked, Burns proceeded to say that he regretted the amendment did not, for instance, tell them what they ought to do if they found a good Labour man whom they could trust putting up for a seat in Parliament, and he was opposed by some literary deadhead, some journalistic blackleg, or wastrel, who had been converted from Liberalism or Toryism, and, being anxious to get into Parliament, pandered to the Socialist movement, and

accepted its programme so that he might sacrifice himself on the altar of his country and incidentally turn a few honest pennies. He denounced the arrant frauds that, in the name of Independent Labour and Socialism, were going about the country doing everything in their power to disintegrate labour and trades unionism. Till the Independent Labour Party were put out of existence, there was nothing between trades unionism on the one side and trades unionism plus a Socialist Labour Party on the other. These parties were at present separate, but if they were blended together they would be invincible. As an honest man and a Socialist member of Parliament, he would vote for the amendment.

Reading between the lines of this speech, it is quite evident that Burns's object, in making it, was to support the Trades Congress Labour Party as a means of putting the Independent Labour Party "out of existence." My comments in the *Workman's Times* fairly well indicate the view of Burns's animus, held by the advanced men at the Congress.

"History," I wrote, "tells us that the Athenians tired of hearing Aristides spoken of as 'the Just.' History may tell us that British workmen tired of hearing John Burns describe himself as 'honest.' Honesty, according to Burns's ideas, must be such a rare virtue in a Labour leader that no one would be suspected of possessing it did he not self-trumpet it to the world. For our part we would remind Burns that there is such a thing as protesting too much."

"'As an honest man and a Socialist member of Parliament he would vote for the amendment.' Why, in the name of all that is honest, should it be necessary for 'a Socialist member of Parliament' to plead 'honesty' as his justification for voting for a Socialist amendment ?

"Further, why should John Burns, in his character as the only 'honest' man, stoop to win the cheers of the party hacks at the Congress by denouncing as 'bogus' the Independent Labour Party? Is this a declaration of war against the I.L.P. If so, why? And will Burns particularise as to who are 'the arrant frauds'? There is not a single man or woman 'going about the country in the name of Independent Labour or Socialism' whose actions afford the slightest ground for this impeachment. His allusion to 'literary deadheads and journalistic blacklegs' is not a cut at H. H. Champion or Maltman Barry. It is intended for men high in the counsels of the Independent Labour Party, who have come under Burns's displeasure, because conscience has compelled them to speak their opinion of his tactics and policy.

"Mark the illogical position such language assumes. When literary men employ their talents in defence of Capitalism, Liberalism, or Toryism, they are the 'hirelings of the press,' or they are charged, as Burns himself charged the Scotch journalists during the railway strike, with accepting bribes to publish misleading news. When they, at much sacrifice of 'honest pennies,' definitely pronounce for Socialism, then they are charged with self-seeking, and are dubbed 'deadheads,' 'black-legs,' and 'wastrels.'"

The Socialist amendment was carried by 137 votes to 97. As showing the progress made in four years, I may say that a similar resolution was defeated at Liverpool, ruled out of order at Newcastle by Thomas Burt as a short cut to the millennium, defeated again at Glasgow, and now finally carried at Belfast. Burns, of course, regarded its triumph as due to himself. Indeed, at this time, he was keen on establishing a Labour Party on the Trades Congress basis, with himself as its Parlia-

mentary leader. Hardie was still undisputed leader of the I.L.P., but if the I.L.P. were "put out of existence," where would Hardie be then, poor fellow?

That something like this was in Burns's mind no one who saw him and heard him at Belfast could doubt. On the landing stage at Liverpool, on the return journey, he told a correspondent of the *Workman's Times* that he had gone to the Congress "to observe several folks." He laughed genially at the *Sunday Chronicle's* description of him as the watch-dog of the Congress—ever on duty, putting in his full eight hours. He talked freely of the Labour Party that would come into existence as the result of the Congress scheme, and began to forecast the work that he would do as its leader.

"The unemployed are quiet now in Liverpool," he said, "but the winter will tell. Send me along to Westminster—no, to Battersea—some reports, and keep me posted in what is being done. You may rely on me if you want anything doing."

Burns could not get it out of his mind that it was his duty to purge the Labour movement of those whom he regarded as undesirables. In an interview in the *Daily Chronicle*, he breathed out fire and threatenings against those he suspected. And he published the following brief opinion of the Congress, which is useful as showing the trend of his thoughts:—

"A useful Congress. Socialism has scored, Labour has triumphed, trades unionism been consolidated, intriguers (this with a darksome brow) have been checked (not chequed)."

And now, remembering that he is still in the running for the leadership of the Labour Party, let us leave Burns for a time, while we see how Hardie fared at the Congress.

Hardie did not figure so prominently as Burns. He moved the following resolution:—

“That in the opinion of this Congress, the claims of Labour in Parliament should be asserted, irrespective of the convenience of any political party; and to secure this it is necessary that the Labour members in the House of Commons should be unconnected with either the Liberal or Tory Party, and should sit in opposition to any Government until such times as they are strong enough to form a Labour Cabinet.”

This resolution was lost, 96 voting for it, 119 against it. Hardie was also a candidate for the secretaryship of the Parliamentary Committee in opposition to Charles Fenwick, M.P. The voting was, Fenwick 251, Hardie 89. Burns strongly supported Fenwick, “considering him, spite of his opposition on the eight hours’ question, a hard worker, and a rare good fellow.”

Hardie summed up his impressions of the Congress as follows :—

“A delightful Congress. Fifty years in advance of the last one. The feeling shows that even the older Unionists recognise Socialism as inevitable. Election to the Parliamentary Committee satisfactory. My own vote for the secretaryship larger than I expected. Personal animus against me for having fought unpopular questions in the past mellowing.”

This was the state of affairs at Belfast in September, 1893. The following year, Burns secured the expulsion of Hardie at the Cardiff Congress, and also came to a final rupture with the S.D.F. in Battersea.

CHAPTER XXIX

BURNS AND THE S.D.F. IN 1894—HYNDMAN'S IMPEACHMENT

DESPITE the contemptuous terms in which Burns, at Belfast, had referred to "bogus" Labour parties, there were many in the ranks of the I.L.P. who regretted that he and others of the front rank of Labour leaders still held aloof, and one of these, H. Russell Smart, wrote an open letter for publication in the *Workman's Times*, inscribed "To Messrs. John Burns, Tom Mann, Fred Hammill, and others to whom it may apply," inviting them, now that the I.L.P. had been purged of all connection with Champion and Barry, to throw in their lot with the party.

I will quote a passage or two from this appeal just to show that, if Burns did eventually completely estrange himself from the Independent Labour movement, it was not because overtures were not made to him to take up a distinguished position in its councils.

"We have heard a great deal," wrote Smart, "of the parrot cry of Tory gold from Liberal hacks; it is time a little evidence was brought forward to back it up. If there be a shadow of proof implicating any of its members, there will be none more anxious to expel the guilty than the I.L.P. itself.

"What then is to prevent you, gentlemen, from yourselves becoming the head of the Independent Labour Party in actual fact, as you are in reality.

Why should not Burns, Mann, Hardie, Curran, Hammill, Tillett, Graham, and others, be delegated by their respective constituencies, present and prospective, and combine with men of equal honesty, though, perhaps, not such prominence, to form the I.L.P.

"Notwithstanding the vote of the Belfast Congress the trade unions will never form political associations; their power may be and is used politically, but an independent political association is a necessity of the situation. The political association exists, and is flourishing, as may be judged by the work it has already done. Come, then, and take your proper place at its head."

With the exception of Burns, all the men named in this appeal did become members of the I.L.P. Burns, however, still dreamed of his Trades Congress Party, and although, seven years later, such a Labour Party was formed, it may be said here that the Belfast scheme, of which Burns entertained such hopes, proved still-born. At the 1894 Trades Congress it was reported that only two trade unions had applied for affiliation, and the project was abandoned. But, of course, Burns could not see so far ahead, and it is unquestionable that at this time he was exceedingly sanguine about the emergence of a "Genuine" Labour Party, with himself as its leader.

Meantime, he came to an open rupture with the Social Democratic Federation over the threatened opposition of the Conservatives to his re-election for Battersea, a normal development which, with his usual exaggeration, he ascribed to the machinations of the S.D.F.

The first I heard of this was in a letter from a Battersea correspondent, which I published in the *Workman's Times* for January 13, 1894. He wrote:

"I suppose you have heard that the Tories have

induced a man to stand in their interest at the next Parliamentary election in this division. A *Star* man had an interview with Burns on Friday last with reference to the gentleman who is willing to fight him, and I am sorry to say that Burns distinctly laid it down that the Social Democrats in and out of Battersea were responsible for the Tory candidature. This is a very serious statement, and I am glad to say that our branch intend to discuss it at their next meeting.

“Last night Burns addressed a meeting in the Washington Music Hall, Battersea, and, according to this morning’s *Daily Chronicle*, Burns gave utterance to the following statement:—

“I am told that I am to be opposed by a banker on one side and by bigots on the other. I shall sweep the floor with both of them. Finance and fanaticism are to fight against a Labour man. But let me say that if I am combated here, I will carry the fight to every constituency where men who hold these views are standing. What we did on the L.C.C. we will do three times over on the Parliamentary election. From whom am I to take my marching orders? From men who fancy they are Admirable Crichtons, Pitts, and Bolingbrokes, but who have not got sufficient brains to run a whelk-stall. I have had enough of fighting to last a lifetime. In the years to come there is going to be the same combat, and I am going into it with my hat off.”

“Of course we are the chaps who are unable to run whelk-stalls. It is pretty plain to most people that Burns is going very fast to the wrong side. I, for one, even now still hope that he may see the error of his ways, and come back to the right path, once more using his grand abilities on behalf of militant Socialism.”

Commenting on the above letter I wrote:—

"Now, I don't think that is an unfriendly letter, and Burns would be better advised if he would make friends with his old comrades of the S.D.F. He has everything to lose and nothing to gain by giving the rein to invective against men who have it in their power to do him an ill turn. For myself, I would like to say that I should regard it as a distinct disaster to the cause of labour if, by any combination of avowed enemies and disappointed friends, John Burns happened to be defeated at the next general election."

I think it well to let it be seen that, whatever was the feeling towards Burns in the S.D.F., there was not, at this time, any rancour against him in the I.L.P., for which I claimed editorially to speak.

But the quarrel with the S.D.F. arising out of Burns's charges grew apace, and culminated in an epistolary duel between Burns and Hyndman, one of the few occasions on which Burns, who was usually chary about putting pen to paper, ventured into print. Burns's contribution to this discussion is a veritable living document.

What led up to the correspondence was the passing of a resolution at the Battersea Branch of the S.D.F. condemning the statement Burns had made as utterly without foundation, and calling upon him to substantiate his charges. Following upon this the allegations were commented on at the annual New Year's Gathering of the London branches of the S.D.F. by George Lansbury, then the S.D.F. Parliamentary candidate for Walworth, who became the I.L.P. Member for Bow and Bromley in 1910, and who was in the chair, and by H. R. Taylor, a member of the Executive, who had fought Bethnal-Green in 1892.

Lansbury said they were accused of being subsidised by the Tory party for the purpose of splitting the progressive vote—a charge which those

who made it had to repel themselves not very long ago. The best way to show Mr. John Burns that it was useless for him to try that sort of business was to so organise themselves that when they did fight they should make a respectable show. They might blackguard Mr. Burns until they were black in the face, and would not hurt him in the least ; but one or two really good Social Democratic victories would do more to close the mouth of Mr. Burns and all the other Fabian permeators than anything else.

Taylor said John Burns's charge against them was a foul lie, intended as an excuse to enable him to go down into the constituencies and oppose Socialist candidates. John Burns (a Voice : "Mister Burns," and hisses) had thrown off the mantle of Social Democracy and adopted that of Liberalism. He was doing the work for which he had so often denounced Henry Broadhurst, and there was room for no more Broadhursts in the Labour movement. It was, however, better to have a known enemy than a false friend.

Hyndman was present at this meeting, and delivered an address, but does not seem to have referred to the Burns episode. He made up for it next day, however, by writing to the *Star* to "explain" why Burns was denounced at the S.D.F. meeting.

Hyndman's letter appeared in the London *Star* of date 16th January, 1894. It read as follows :—

"Sir,—You will perhaps allow me to explain, as an original member of the Social Democratic Federation, how it came about that Mr. John Burns, M.P., was denounced by Trade Unionists from the platform, and hissed by the crowded audience at the general meeting of the London members of the S.D.F.

"I may remark, before giving those reasons, that

so far from rending those who succeed in carrying out the principles we preach, as you say we do in your note this evening, we welcome back all who have honestly quitted our organisation, and who see their way to cordially work with us again. Thus we are on the best of terms to-day, I am glad to say, with William Morris. Of those who have gone away in the past and are now once more members of the body I need only mention Belfort Bax, James Macdonald, Pete Curran, and Andreas Scheu; but I have reason to believe that no long time will elapse before other well-known champions of the 'New Unionism' will be found under the red banner of the S.D.F.

"Why then was Mr. John Burns attacked and hissed when Keir Hardie (though he, too, does not belong to us) was loudly cheered?

"1. Because no sooner was Mr. John Burns elected on the L.C.C. for Battersea as an independent Social Democrat, chiefly by the enthusiastic and wholly unpaid efforts of the members of the Battersea Branch of the S.D.F., than he left the organisation, did his utmost to break it up, and vilified his old comrades all round.

"2. Because he was hand and glove with Mr. H. H. Champion, both before and after Mr. Champion was expelled from the S.D.F.; was one of the editorial committee of the *Labour Elector*, and gave Mr. Champion the earnest letter of introduction to the workers of Australia, which enabled that gentleman to do so much mischief there.

"3. Because ever since Mr. John Burns has been a member of Parliament, instead of maintaining an independent attitude, he has become a thorough-going supporter of the Capitalist Liberal Party, going so far as to act as a sort of an amateur 'whip' to that party, and voting for the institution of a

House of Lords in Ireland at the same time that he was very properly attacking the House of Lords in England.

“4. Because, instead of supporting Keir Hardie in his efforts to force the hand of the Liberal Government on the question of the unemployed, he has maintained a very doubtful attitude throughout on this important matter.

“5. Because he has refused to attack and censure the Home Secretary for those Featherstone shootings of which Mr. Asquith accepted ‘the full responsibility,’ and as chairman of the Trade Union Parliamentary Committee, as I am informed, has shown himself more moderate on this matter than Mr. Henry Broadhurst.

“6. Because at the by-election for the L.C.C. at Battersea he supported, to the full extent of his power, Mr. Willis, an official Liberal and a shopkeeper, against his own old comrade and intimate friend, H. B. Rogers, a workman, a Trade Unionist, and a Social Democrat.

“7. Because in an interview with a *Star* reporter the other day he actually stated that the Social Democratic Federation were acting in conjunction with the Tories, and accepting pecuniary aid from them in order to turn him (Mr. John Burns) out of the representation of Battersea.

“8. Because last Sunday week, when he repeated this monstrous misrepresentation in his speech at the Washington Music Hall, he also threatened that, in revenge for this invented injury, he would oppose Lansbury in Walworth and me in Burnley.

“Mr. John Burns has become, in short, an active and bitter enemy of the Social Democratic Party, and a chosen vessel of one of the great political factions. You cannot expect that Social Democrats, who have little or nothing to hope from either Liberal or Tory, will readily forgive such

a succession of backslidings as those enumerated above. We may be fools, fanatics, or 'Tory tools,' and all the rest of it, but at any rate the Social Democratic Federation is the only Socialistic organisation in the country, and we are gaining ground throughout Great Britain to-day at a pace which surprises even me. This, too, though Mr. Burns and his allies of the Fabian Society have done their utmost to upset and injure us for years past."

Burns's reply did not appear until a week had elapsed. Evidently he took great pains with its composition, and as it is really his laboured *apologia* it is something in the nature of an historical document.

CHAPTER XXX

BURNS ON HIS DEFENCE

THE value of John Burns's reply to Hyndman counts in this. In it he not only sketched out his progress from 1885 to 1894, but suggested the lines in which he intended his future to run. We are thus able to judge him by his own testimony.

Burns wrote :

“Sir,—In your issue of 16 January Mr. Hyndman delivered himself of a tirade of abuse of myself of which I had intended, as usual, taking no notice. I am, however, requested—unnecessarily, I think—by the Battersea Labour League, to answer what is, after all, only a repetition of old, unfounded, and trivial charges, brought up-to-date, spiced by jealousy, salted with personal hate, and served up with wanton exaggeration.

“To commence with, Mr. Hyndman had no authority to make an attack upon myself under the assumed concurrence of William Morris and others who neither share his malignancy nor approve his pettiness.

“But it will be best to take Mr. Hyndman's charges consecutively.

“1. Leaving the Social Democratic Federation and trying to break it up.

“I practically left the S.D.F. in 1888, as after November 1887 I confined myself principally to local work in Battersea, as I was disgusted with

the incompetency of the Central Executive, and above all by the suspicious and quarrelsome character of Mr. Hyndman, who has been the direct cause of alienating from the S.D.F. all the present day Socialists of standing and ability. The final cause of my leaving, however, was the conduct of the Executive over the Kennington election, 1889, where, failing to act themselves, they objected to others, notably myself, for supporting, with the approval of the Battersea members of the S.D.F., Mr. Beaufoy, whose adoption of the eight hours and its concession to his own workmen led me to give him my support. This incident was the last straw that gave the Battersea camel the hump. After this, however, I lectured for the Battersea Branch of the S.D.F., and am now on friendly terms with the bulk of the local Social Democrats, both within and without the S.D.F., the majority of whom are on my Election Committee. I have also been invited by many branches of the S.D.F. during the last two years to lecture for them; have received, November 1893, unanimous resolutions of thanks from the Strand Branch of the S.D.F. for my 'outspoken statement of the Socialist position' in Parliament, and, greatest honour, or humiliation, of all, have even been asked to go to Burnley to support Mr. Hyndman's candidature.

"2. My connection with Mr. Champion.

"Till 1890 Mr. Champion's work for labour generally warranted the friendly relations that existed between us. Since 1890 I have not worked with him. What is more, I entirely disapprove of much that he has done, and more that he has attempted. Because I differ with Mr. Champion is no reason why, at the instigation of Mr. Hyndman, I should coarsely assail him. Mr. Champion, with all his faults—and in vain I have tried to reduce

them—was a man of courage. This Mr. Hyndman, with all his self-assertion, could never claim to be.

“3. I have not been independent enough in Parliament.

“Who is to judge? Mr. Hyndman or my constituents? Up to the present they say I have, in spite of Mr. Hyndman’s denial. But what is the test of independence? Making an independent ass of myself? If so, I am not so independent of common sense and the responsibility of my official position in the Socialist and trade union movement as to do it. I did not go to Parliament to be a political pantaloons. Neither do I believe with Mr. Hyndman that we should take the guts out of the political concertina to see where the Socialist wind comes from. There is, however, an official test of independence—the division lists. They disclose that on Home Rule, employers’ liability, miners’ eight hours, parish councils, payment of members, eight hours and higher wages for Government employees and dangerous trades, &c., I have voted with the Government when they were on the right road, and against them when they were on the wrong, or when they did not go far enough. I have twenty-two votes recorded against the Government to Mr. Keir Hardie’s fourteen. There are two voting lobbies in Parliament, and frequently one has either to choose between the cowardice of abstention and the acceptance of compromise. I am preferably for the latter as the lesser of two evils, even though it offends Mr. Hyndman.

“4. That I supported an Irish House of Lords.

“This is not true, as on 6th July, 1893, on the question I voted against the Government, the figures being 315 for the Government, 300 against. To show how compromising one has to be in doing

good things, I was sandwiched between Lord Burghley and Viscount Bury in the division list.

“5. I have not supported Mr. Keir Hardie, but maintained a doubtful attitude upon the unemployed question.

“This, again, is untrue, as upon several occasions when the adjournment of the House has been abortively moved—contrary to my advice as a matter of policy—I have stood up and supported Mr. Hardie. When it was moved upon the Address I was at Halifax, supporting Lister, the I.L.P. candidate, against Liberal and Tory; and the last time, when through mismanagement it was confined to a narrow issue, I was ill. But assuming I had been in the House, I should not have supported Mr. Hardie on many points. I believe he exaggerated the number out of work. I do not believe in building cruisers in order to find work for unemployed labourers and navvies, or for engineers and shipwrights, even if I had a shipyard in my constituency. Further, as a Socialist, I am, as I have ever been, against labour colonies, municipal workshops, and such economic nostrums as find favour with the fledgling economists of the S.D.F. and the embryonic statesmen of the Independent Labour Party.

“6. I have not attacked the Home Secretary over Featherstone.

“I did refuse to condemn until I had read the evidence, and then I found that, although Mr. Asquith ‘accepted the responsibility,’ the local authorities and the magistrates were really to blame. In this I differed from others who had denounced Mr. Asquith outside, but were not present either to attack or apologise when the report upon the matter was before the House. I was in my place, and said that if men riot they must take the consequences, and not expect the

amenities of the law plus the benefits of revolutionary actions. Of course, Mr. Hyndman is an authority upon this subject, as he knows, from a distance, a great deal of riots. When, through Socialist agitation, they have occurred in London, as at Trafalgar Square, Dod Street, or World's End, he has had a pressing engagement elsewhere.

“7. Supporting Mr. Willis at the L.C.C. election as against Mr. H. B. Rogers.

“I supported Mr. Willis because he was democratically chosen, and the Battersea electors justified the support I gave him by giving to him a decisive majority over the other three candidates, mainly because his ability and his record of work on behalf of labour on the bodies of which he had been a member were superior to those of his opponents. Until Mr. Rogers, who has lately been defeated again in his candidature for the local Board of Guardians, shows better qualifications for public office than he has done hitherto, I will pursue the same course. I am not going to support men for public office who qualify for a seat on the London School Board, as Mr. Rogers did, by being fined for not sending his children to school and thus bringing himself and the local labour movement into ridicule and contempt. Mr. Hyndman will grumble at me for refusing to nominate as a magistrate a ‘comrade’ of the S.D.F., whom I insisted should be compelled to leave the Dock Strike, and who—before and since—has several times been convicted of criminal offences.

“8. The statement that I accused the S.D.F. of accepting pecuniary aid from the Tories is a deliberate untruth.

“I did accuse certain persons—and I was not referring to the S.D.F. when I said it, but to certain men of the Independent Labour Party—that, in threatening to run a candidate against me

(*vide* Tory evening paper) they were in collusion with the local Tories, whose only hope is that such will be done. The cap fitted another head, however, and the speeches at the New Year's meeting of the S.D.F. showed that the desire and threat 'to drive me from the House of Commons,' as Mr. Quelch put it, is shared with some of the Independent Labour Party with the S.D.F. The statement that at Battersea I threatened to oppose Mr. Hyndman at Burnley and Mr. Lansbury at Walworth is entirely another invention of Mr. Hyndman. Mr. Hyndman's shallow bluster, without opposition from any one, will lose him any chance he may have of polling 1000 votes. His attack on me and others has reduced it already. As for Mr. Lansbury at Walworth, he will want all the help he can get to wipe out the heritage of melancholy failure that Mr. Quelch left behind him in that district.

"Mr. Hyndman winds up with a general screech, calling me a bitter enemy of the S.D.F. This is not so. That body has but one enemy, and he exists in the person of Mr. Hyndman. He is the fool furious who would rather lead in the hell of his own failures than co-operate with others in the heaven of the people's success. He it is who ten years ago, and since, suspected everybody but himself, and who to-day, as a result, has not got working with him many of the men and women who, in spite of egotistical attacks, are making Socialism a force in England. These people intend, in spite of him and his small crowd of precocious youths and immature men, to also make it a Parliamentary force.

"In future, I intend in my work for labour to ignore the man who, in the dock in April 1886, acted like a craven; who, in 1887, ran from Trafalgar Square like a beaten cur; and on all occasions

has fallen short of the great movement that demands better qualifications than he displays. Mr. Hyndman, who to-day bullies Bebel and libels Liebnecht, the trusted leaders of two millions of German workmen, who dictates to Battersea, the advance guard of the saner Socialist school, must be told that the Socialist movement of to-day is not what it was ten years ago. Then we had to attract attention. Now the men whom Mr. Hyndman attacks have to be responsible for guiding society, with all its ramifications, through its transition stage. Mr. Hyndman shirks the responsibility for this critical work. I, with others, do not, and in the work that presses on us we will not be influenced by the shrieking of the physical, mental, and moral cretins of the S.D.F. Win or lose, we intend to pursue the policy we inaugurated on the London County Council, and are continuing in the House of Commons, and for this there is but one stimulus required, the hatred of the corrupt, criminal and disappointed men. This I have secured. For the sake of labour I can bear it, and for the promotion of labour's best and purest interests I am going on with my task. That is, the municipal and legislative expression of rational, disciplined, sober Social Democracy. For this I will work, uninfluenced by slander, neither depressed by misfortune nor intoxicated by success."

How far, and in what spirit, Burns carried out his resolve, it is now my duty to show.

CHAPTER XXXI

BURNS'S DENUNCIATION OF THE I.L.P.—HIS "CHOICE DERANGEMENT OF EPITAPHS"

IT would be easy to pick holes in most of the statements Burns made in his reply to Hyndman. One instance, however, must suffice.

I deal with this instance because it shows how inconsistent Burns was in not supporting Hardie on the Unemployed question. He justified his hostile treatment of Hardie by saying, "as a Socialist, I am, as I have ever been, against labour colonies, municipal workshops."

Now this is simply not true. In the speech Burns delivered in the Washington Music Hall, Battersea, on September 20th, 1890, reporting on the Liverpool Trades Union Congress, Burns said:—

"A resolution in favour of the municipal organisation of unskilled workers in times of distress and bad trade was also passed. In a word, we asked the State and the Municipality to keep pace with the displacement of labour that is going on by the introduction of labour-saving machinery. There are hundreds and thousands of men who, usually of a proud and independent disposition, are in bad times compelled either to beg, borrow, or steal, or what is worse than either, perhaps go to prison or workhouse. We say that State and Municipalities, failing reduced hours all round, which I infinitely prefer to relief works of any kind, should have

municipal workshops for these men who are out of work, which would result beneficially to the community from an *£ s. d.* point of view, and will result in the moral, physical, and intellectual improvement of the men, and act as a great preventative to that state of degradation into which they would otherwise fall."

Here we have the Municipal Workshop specifically advocated, and, generally, it may be said, that the suggestions Hardie made for dealing with the unemployed, and which Burns referred to as the "economic nostrums of the embryonic statesmen of the Independent Labour Party," were exactly on the lines Burns had advocated when he, in Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park, was championing the cause of the unemployed. So much it is necessary to say here in view of the action Burns took in 1895, when Hardie's persistence, notwithstanding the assiduity with which Burns "lobbied" against the concession, at length compelled the Government to appoint a Select Committee to inquire into Distress caused through Lack of Employment.

It would take too long to elaborate the indictment that could be drawn up against Burns from an analysis of the Blue Book containing the report of that Select Committee. Suffice it to say that on every page there is ample evidence of the sleuth-hound persistence with which Burns hung on to Hardie's trail. Both Burns and Hardie were members of the Select Committee, Burns sitting at the right hand of Campbell-Bannerman, the chairman, and acting all through as counsel in defence of the *status quo*. He cross-examined Hardie's witnesses, ridiculed Hardie's proposals, and did his utmost to spike Hardie's guns.

The Select Committee came to an untimely end through the defeat of the Rosebery Government in June 1895. At the General Election ensuing

Burns was re-elected for Battersea, and immediately proceeded to execute an indecent war dance in celebration of the disasters that had befallen Keir Hardie and the candidates of the Independent Labour Party and S.D.F.

The General Election of 1895 witnessed not only a Liberal defeat; the only Independent Labour Member of Parliament, Keir Hardie, lost his seat for South-West Ham.

In addition, every I.L.P. candidate for Parliament, numbering twenty-eight, including Hardie, was defeated. All the S.D.F. candidates, five in number, likewise figured at the bottom of the poll.

On August 4th, 1895, Burns delivered a speech in Battersea Park in which he made merry over the misfortunes of the I.L.P. and S.D.F.

Referring to George Lansbury's S.D.F. candidature for Walworth, he said:—

“After fourteen years' work in a city of 500,000 voters they can only poll 203 votes. This is an impotent and ridiculous display.”

Of the I.L.P. Burns said:—

“The I.L.P. is burst, and only a small remnant remains. Its tactics are those of howling dervishes, and its leaders are now in the desert of defeat. Its progress has been politically checked by their rout at this election.”

Burns proceeded to pile epithets on the heads of the Socialist leaders. As showing the extent of his vocabulary of abuse, I cull the following specimens from this Battersea speech:—

“Erotic pamphleteers and journalists”; “howling dervishes”; “Tory bonnets”; “Crank and fadists”; “disappointed revolutionaries”; “impostors and adventurers”; “needy political knife-grinders”; “empty charlatans”; “unscrupulous demagogues”; “universal failures”; “vain cowards”; “wreckers”; “fanatical fools”; “political pantaloons.”

In addition, "their policy was one of screeches and spasms."

Of the S.D.F. Burns spoke as follows:—

"Every movement must have its dustbin—the S.D.F. fills that position efficiently. It is the dumping ground of all the cranks, faddists, fanatics, and disappointed revolutionaries. They are factious, fanatical, intolerant, suspicious, and ignorantly impracticable. It is urged that I belonged to them once. That is true, with others that have left. I provided them with brains and capacity—they have shown neither since our departure."

Having thus pronounced the "epitaphs" of all the existing Socialist leaders and parties, Burns went on to suggest that a New Party with a new policy might arise.

"From these," he said, "must be re-created another party, another movement, perhaps another organisation, more patient, less hysterical, more business-like.

"The Unemployed have better friends who intend by less showy methods to do all that is possible, as hitherto, to palliate and remedy their condition.

"I am sorry to think there is no prospect yet of the formation of a Socialist Party in England. What will prevent it? The Socialists. So anxious are they to reach the millenium that they sacrifice each other on the road."

This precious passage of a speech in which he had been scarifying and sacrificing Socialist leaders wholesale, was immediately followed by a declaration of a further intention to "sacrifice."

"Nothing can be done, however," he continued, "until the erotic school of pamphleteers and journalists who dominate the policy of the I.L.P. are relegated to their proper place."

As, though from 1895 to 1900 Burns had the Parliamentary platform all to himself, nothing was

done to relegate "to their proper places" those whom Burns by implication denounced, he seems to have determined to qualify for office whenever the Liberals returned to power.

It would be wearisome to justify that general statement by chapter and verse, so I will let it stand as justified by the event.

But it was not so much his own merit as the necessity to do something to stop the landslide of working men to the ranks of the Labour Party as formed in 1900 that made Burns's market.

CHAPTER XXXII

JACK IN OFFICE

IN his elevation to Cabinet rank, as in every stage of his career, Burns profited by the labours of other people. Had there been no Independent Labour movement winning away the allegiance of the trade unionists from the Liberal Party, the desperate expedient of including a working man in a Capitalistic Cabinet would never have been resorted to. Burns's promotion was directly due to the urgent necessity to administer some kind of check to the increasing popularity of the Labour Party.

Burns himself knew that this was the impelling motive. The story told about what happened when he was "sent for" by Campbell-Bannerman proves it. It was Campbell-Bannerman who himself related the incident.

"I sent for Mr. Burns," he is reported to have said, "and informed him that I would like him to accept the Presidency of the Local Government Board, with a seat in the Cabinet. Naturally, I expected him to be somewhat overpowered by the announcement. But, to my surprise, he seemed to think that the obligation was on my side.

"'Bravo, Sir Henry,' he said, slapping me on the back, 'bravo ! That is the most popular thing you have yet done.'"

Burns undoubtedly knew what use the Liberals would make of his promotion to Cabinet rank. It was the one card that they were able to play to



BURNS IN COURT DRESS
(From *John Bull*)

deter working men *en masse* deserting the Liberal Party for the Labour Party, and they used that card, and Burns himself used it, to trump the Labour lead.

In lending himself to this expedient Burns proved false to all his previous professions. In 1893, an interview with Burns, written by Raymond Blaythwayt, appeared in the January issue of the *Idler*. In that interview Burns is represented as saying—

“I have not the slightest desire for office. It is for me to give hostages to disinterestedness. My only way is by teaching and preaching, and convincing the people that the hunting for the loaves which one denounces in other people has no charm for oneself. I would sooner be plain ‘John Burns’ than the Rt. Hon. John Burns, Premier of England. The fishes of office often stink. I don’t want office nor money either.

“Office!” he cried with fine scorn, “I am prouder of my present office—Judge-Advocate of the poor—than I should be of the premiership itself. The conviction is born in them that I am after neither office nor money, and they trust me.”

That was Burns in 1893. In 1894 he was still of the same mind. In June, 1894, the Lobby correspondent of the *Times* wrote:—

“When the Ministry was in process of reconstruction owing to the retirement of Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Burns was approached with a view to his acceptance of an official position. Although the offer was a tempting one—the appointment to which the hon. gentleman had the refusal carrying with it a substantial salary—the member for Battersea did not see his way to accept it. In the further shuffling of cards necessitated by Mr. Mundella’s resignation of the Presidency of the Board of Trade, Mr. Burns is said to have again been invited to

join the Government with the same result, his contention being that he can best serve the interests of the working classes by maintaining an independent attitude."

In 1894, it will be seen, Mr. Burns condemned by anticipation his later action when he became President of the Local Government Board. "He could," he believed, "best serve the interests of the working classes by maintaining an independent attitude."

But what had happened between 1894 and 1905 to cause him to change his mind? Was there any less need for Labour members to maintain an independent attitude? The answer is obvious. The change had occurred in Mr. Burns himself. From being a Labour member he had developed into an official Liberal.

He had lost touch with the modern Labour movement. Although, from 1895 to 1900 he was not irritated by the Parliamentary rivalry of Keir Hardie, he was chagrined to discover that Hardie, during those dark years, was becoming, day by day, a greater force out of doors. During those five years the despised I.L.P., under Hardie's leadership, was laying the foundations on which the National Trade Union Labour Party was built in 1900. Hardie, in that year, re-entered the House of Commons, and was the first of the Labour M.P.'s to be paid a salary out of the funds of the Labour Party. During the 1900-5 Parliament, Hardie was joined by Crooks, Shackleton, and Henderson, who formed the advance guard of the thirty Independent Labour Members returned in 1906, and the first act of the new Labour Party in the 1906 Parliament was to unanimously elect Hardie as their chairman and Parliamentary leader.

Burns knew, when he accepted office in December, 1905, that the Labour Party was coming into the next Parliament in strong force. Burns knew

that Hardie would be acclaimed its Leader, and he ranged himself in opposition to that Labour Party, and accepted the Consolation Prize—for he would much rather have been the leader of the Labour Party—of the Presidency of the Local Government Board.

That, anyway, is my reading of the situation. I do not believe Burns was personally influenced by the inducement of salary. If the thought of £2000 a year, increased to £5000 in 1910, weighed with him at all, it would be more on account of his wife and son—the son born to him after fourteen years of Malthusian married life, the son who had not arrived when Burns talked about giving hostages to disinterestedness.

Anyhow, Burns accepted office, and the complaint I have to make about that is not so much that he did so, as that he immediately, from the Treasury Bench, began to slander the unemployed.

“On my promotion to office,” he said, “I had the honour of going with my colleagues to Buckingham Palace. In my Court dress I afterwards took my place at one o’clock in the morning in the long queue of three hundred or four hundred men who assemble nightly on the Thames Embankment.

“I mixed with those men for two or three hours, and I am glad to say that they did not recognise me as one who had come fresh from the Palace of His Majesty.

“I turned up the collar of my coat, pulled my ‘bowler’ over my eyes, and looked as miserable as I could, and at the end of this long queue I, a Minister in receipt of £2000 a year, held out my hand and received my portion of soup and my pound of bread.”

Burns made that statement in the House of Commons, and it was reported in all the papers,

but there were those who cast doubts on the literal truthfulness of the narrative.

Will Crooks, the Labour member for Woolwich, for instance, speaking at the Bow Palace immediately afterwards, said he wondered, if it ever came to his lot to wear Court dress, whether he would walk down the Embankment in knee-breeches, with garters and low shoes with silver buckles, wearing a sword and a velvet coat, and whether he would be able to put a big overcoat over his dress and get a basin of soup. He did not think it possible to do such a thing.

But, whether it were possible or not, Burns did say he had done it. And when he related the motive with which it was done, it will be easier to understand the disgust Burns's behaviour in office speedily induced in the breasts of the members of the Labour Party, even of those who were anxious that he should have fair trial.

The debate, as I have said, was on unemployment, the subject on which Burns had been so eloquent in the 'Eighties. But his argument now was that the unemployed man was merely a loafer.

"What," he asked, "was the kind of day's history in the life of such a man in search of a day's work? Between nine and ten in the morning he went to Birdcage Walk and listened to the Army Band. After this he walked across the Park to Soho or Piccadilly and got his luncheon at some one's expense at a cheap restaurant. 'What shall we do next?' was the question of one companion to another. 'Oh, let us walk across the Park and see old Burns go to the levee.'

"At five o'clock came tea at a cabman's shelter; at ten o'clock there was not money enough for a lodging, but the night being fine this man and his companion elected to go to the Embankment and get soup and shelter.

"Was that," he asked, "a discriminating kind of charity? When a man knew that this sort of thing took place, what kind of incentive was being held out to any sturdy vagrant getting probably 6d., 8d., or 9d. a day from certain sources, with a too indulgent wife or mother, which should prevent him coming up to London and swelling the ranks of the unemployed."

Burns, it will be seen, had already, within twenty-four hours of accepting office, forgotten his own words on the unemployment problem, when he said:—

"They lie in their teeth when they tell you that unemployment is caused by drink. Here I stand, a skilled artisan, teetotaller, vegetarian, non-smoker, and Malthusian. I have not tasted food for twenty-four hours. I have been out of work for four months. There stands my wife. She is turning the ribbons of her bonnet to make it look more respectable. That is my position, a skilled artisan. What then must be the position of those who have not skilled trades, and have a family to support?"

Here, for the moment, I leave John Burns. I have traced his career from the period described in the above words to the time when he donned Court dress for the first time, and improved the occasion by masquerading in it on the Thames Embankment.

We have seen him rise into a Right Honourable; his subsequent progress still remains to be told. In that connection I shall have to deal with a more complex theme, and attempt to show how the influences which triumphed over John Burns were brought unsuccessfully to bear upon the Labour Party itself.

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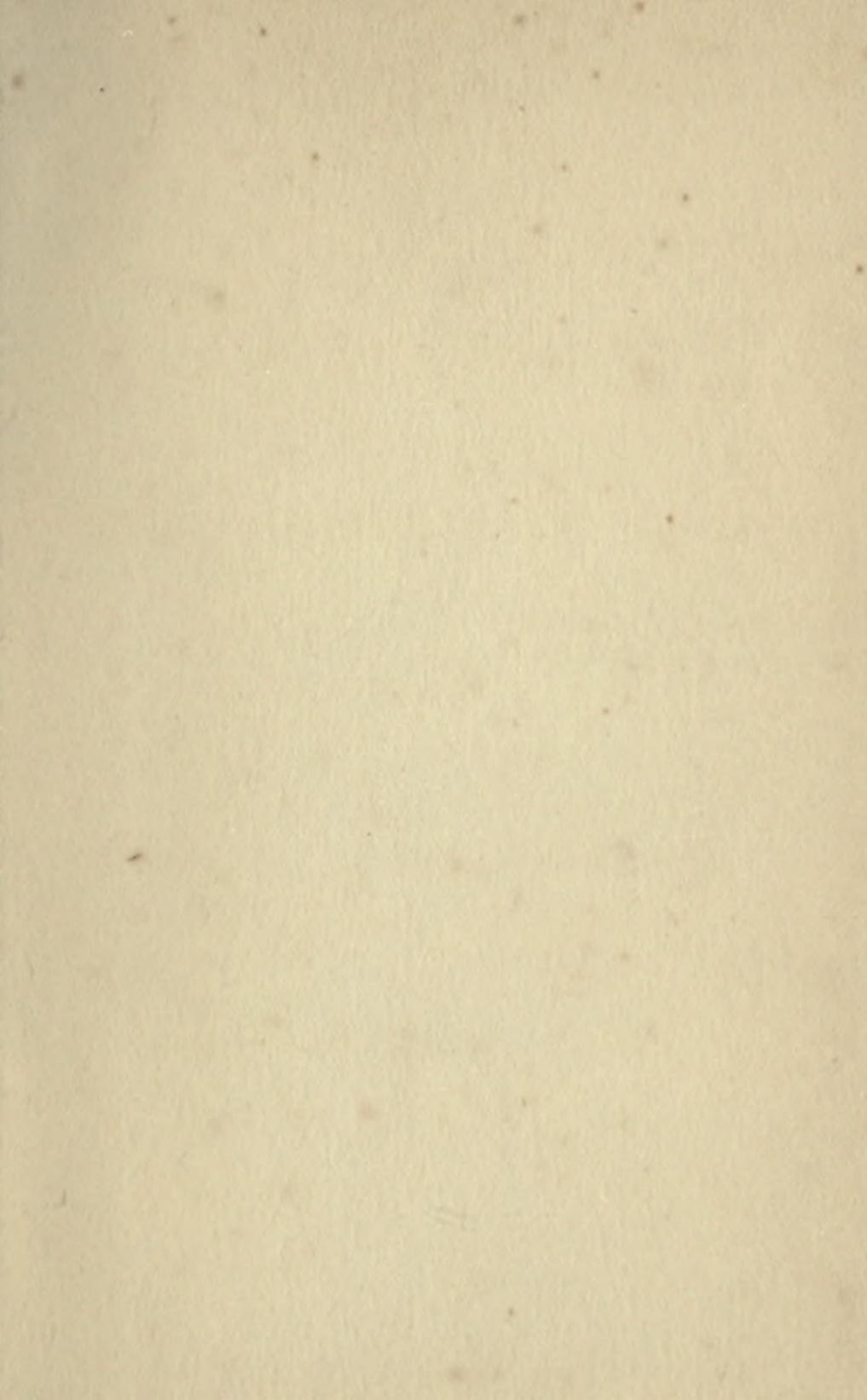
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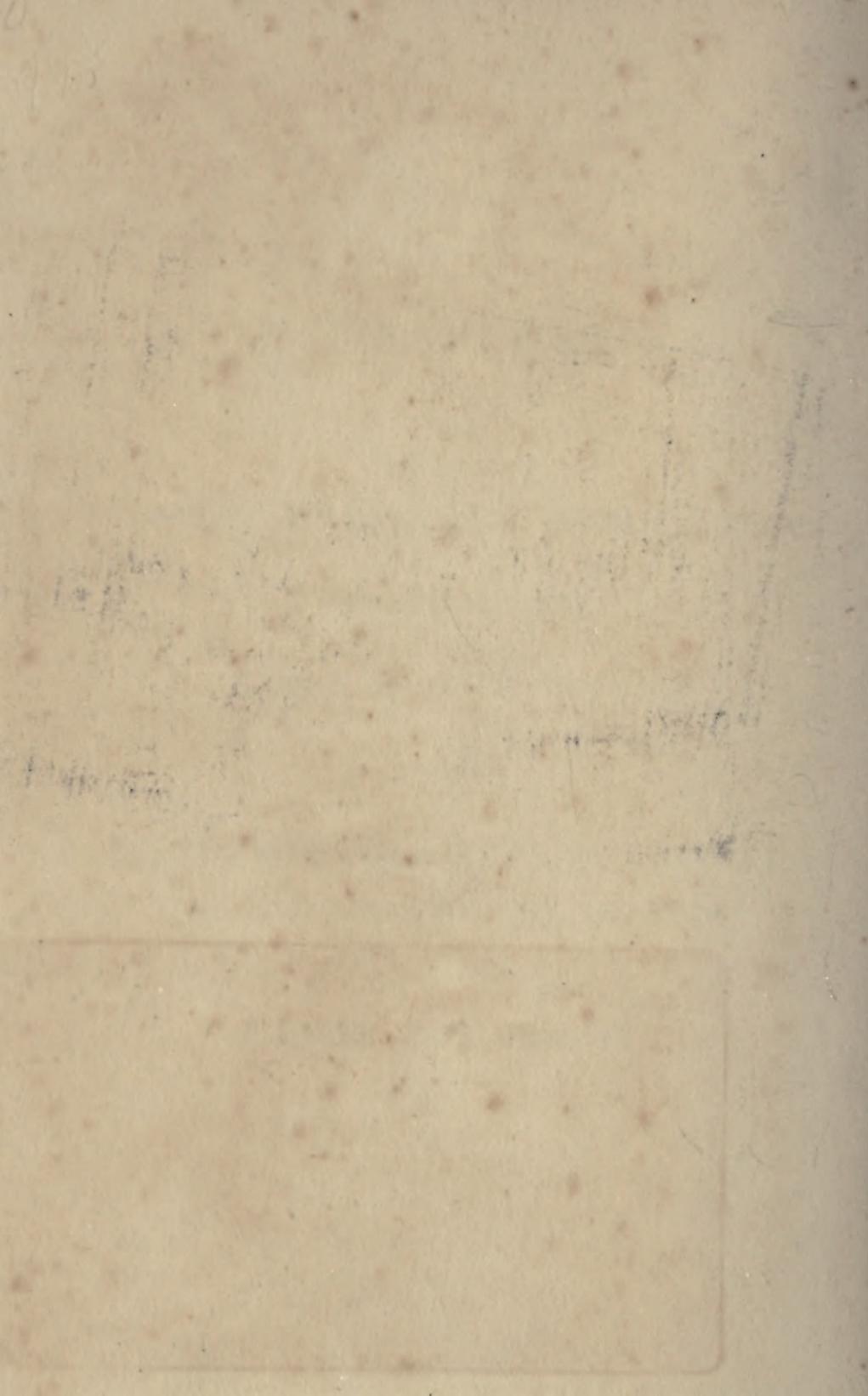
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